

Notice of Meeting and Agenda Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-committee

Date	Time	Venue
Wednesday, 15 November 2023	10:00	Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

MARK CONAGHAN
Head of Corporate Governance

Membership

Councillor Jacqueline Cameron (Convener): Councillor Graeme Clark (Depute Convener):

Councillor Anne Hannigan: Councillor Alec Leishman: Councillor Marie McGurk: Councillor Iain Nicolson: Councillor Jim Paterson:

Hybrid Meeting

Please note that this meeting is scheduled to be held in the Council Chambers. However, it is a hybrid meeting and arrangements have been made for members to join the meeting remotely should they wish.

Members of the Press and Public

Members of the press and public wishing to attend the meeting should report to the customer service centre where they will be met and directed to the meeting.

Further Information

This is a meeting which is open to members of the public.

A copy of the agenda and reports for this meeting will be available for inspection prior to the meeting at the Customer Service Centre, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley and online at <http://renfrewshire.cmis.uk.com/renfrewshire/CouncilandBoards.aspx>

For further information, please email
democratic-services@renfrewshire.gov.uk

Webcasting of Meeting

This meeting will be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site – at the start of the meeting the Convener will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed. To find the webcast please navigate to

<https://renfrewshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

Items of business

Apologies

Apologies from members.

Declarations of Interest and Transparency Statements

Members are asked to declare an interest or make a transparency statement in any item(s) on the agenda and to provide a brief explanation of the nature of the interest or the transparency statement.

- | | | |
|----------|---|----------------|
| 1 | Cost-of-living Update | 5 - 16 |
| | Report by Chief Executive | |
| 2 | Fairer Renfrewshire Programme | 17 - 22 |
| | Report by Chief Executive | |
| 3 | School Meal Debt | 23 - 30 |
| | Report by Director of Finance & Resources | |
| 4 | Summer of Fun 2023 Evaluation | 31 - 74 |
| | Report by Chief Executive | |



To: Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee

On: 15 November 2023

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Cost-of-living Update

1. Summary

- 1.1 At each of the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee meetings, an overview of the key context and evidence around current pressures on household finances, both in terms of household income and expenditure has been provided to members.
- 1.2 Since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee on 6 September 2023, there have been a number of changes in economic factors including further reported reductions in energy costs from 1 October 23. Inflation and interest rates have remained high and largely unchanged, and the longevity of these high rates and associated costs of living pressures mean households are still struggling according to some of the evidence and information which has been collected. Elected members are asked to note that:
- The rate of inflation has remained at 6.7% (Sep 23), still well above the 2% target set by the Bank of England
 - The inflation rate for food has reduced slightly; now 12.2%.
 - The Bank of England has recently kept the interest rate unchanged at 5.25% which is the highest rate in 15 years.
 - The Energy Price Cap, originally introduced by Ofgem in January 2019 to set limits on the underlying rates energy suppliers, is now set at £1,834 from the 1 October until 31 December. This means households who use gas and electricity and pay by direct debit will pay on average £1,834, with the reduction reflecting recent falls in wholesale energy prices.

- 1.3 In addition, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published their 'Poverty in Scotland' Report in October. This report offers evidence on the reality of poverty in Scotland, with a focus on low wages and in-work poverty.
- 1.4 This paper provides an overview of information collated by officers at both a national local level where available.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members of the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee note the content of the report.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee meeting on 6 September 2023 an overview of key context and evidence around current pressures on household finances, both in terms of household income and expenditure was examined.
- 3.2 Although since then some pressures have eased slightly, such as the fall in costs for home energy, the management of household finances remains challenging due to continued increases in prices for household goods and the current high interest rates. The long-term nature of the crisis means issues around money and debt are enduring, and indications are that more families who have been managing previously, including those who are working, may be struggling. This paper gives an update on the current cost of living challenges and impacts for families.

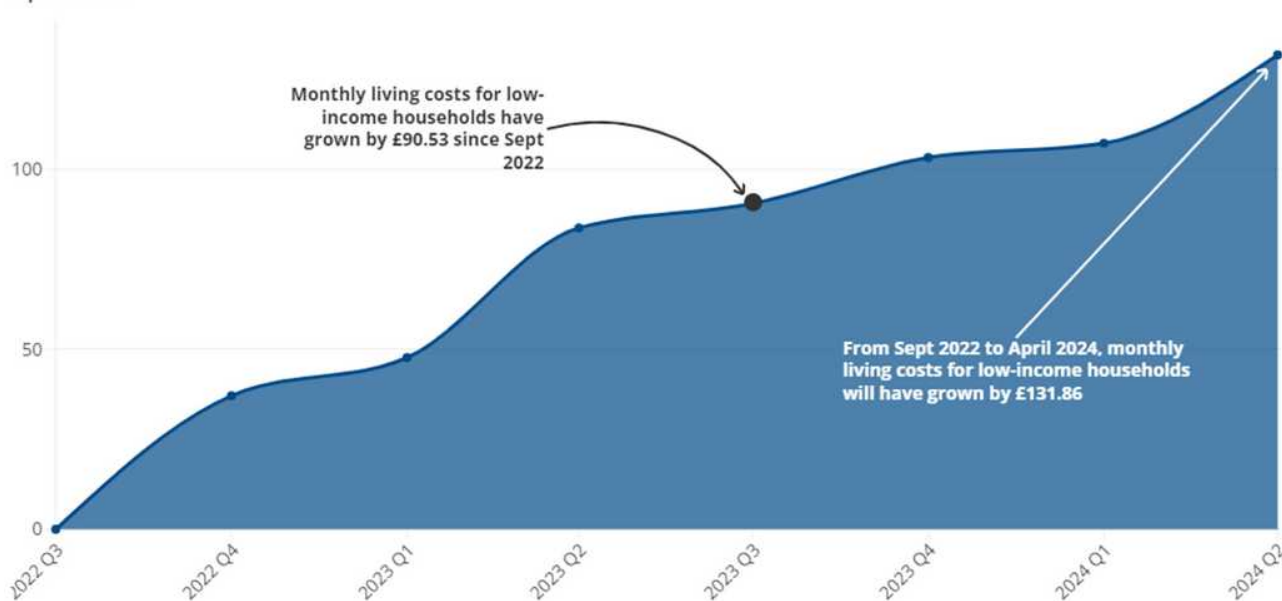
4. Impacts of cost-of-living crisis

Income vs Expenditure for low income households

- 4.1. ONS has looked at rising living costs, and commonly reported reasons among adults who said their cost of living had increased were:
- the price of food shopping (96%)
 - gas or electricity bills (57%)
 - the price of fuel (37%)
 - rent or mortgage costs (27%)
- 4.2. In their report of 6 October, Citizens Advice estimates that since September 2022, living costs for low-income households have risen by more than £90 per month and that by April 2024 that figure will have risen to £130.

■ Growth in living costs for low income households

£ per month



Analysis based on expenditure data from the ONS Family Spending series, with latest available data updated in line with ONS inflation outcomes (up to Q2 2022) and Bank of England inflation forecasts (up to Q2 2024, market median rates). Low income households are classed as those in the second income decile.



- 4.3. Their findings show that certain groups are significantly over-represented in the proportions experiencing food insecurity and using food banks, with two thirds of people referred to Trussell Trust foodbanks being disabled and families with children being over-represented in referrals. Working age adults, especially those who live alone and who aren't working are also more likely to be referred.

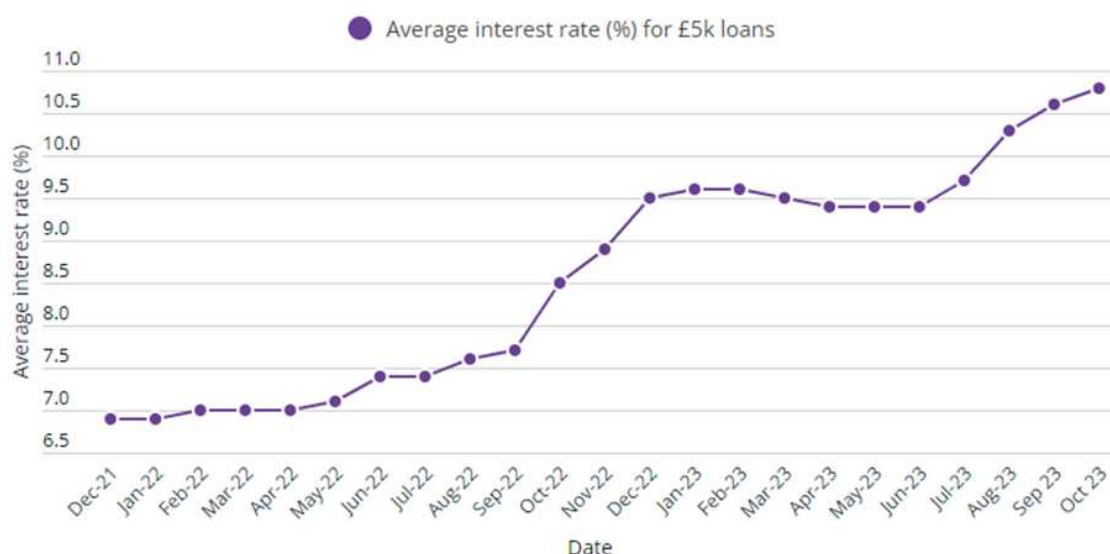
Renfrewshire Foodbank

- 4.4. In Renfrewshire, numbers using the Foodbank have increased this quarter compared with the same quarter last year. In the quarter to 30 September 1295 vouchers were issued compared to 1009 last year, a 28% increase. This quarter 1295 adults and 704 children received Foodbank assistance.
- 4.5. This most recent data also showed 583 vouchers issued due to 'Rising costs of essentials' compared to 488 last quarter. This was the reason with the highest number of vouchers issued. In terms of Foodbank vouchers by ward, although numbers are still small at 62, 'Houston, Crosslee and Linwood' saw an 148% increase in vouchers since the same quarter last year. The next highest percentage increase was for Paisley Southwest, which saw voucher numbers increase from 72 to 122, an almost 70% increase. Johnstone South and Elderslie saw a 35% increase, and as previously reported figures suggest that those people in areas with potentially less deprivation overall may be increasingly needing support to combat cost-of-living pressures.

- 4.6. The Foodbank has reported there has been an increase in people seeking support who are currently in employment. The increased voucher numbers in the less deprived areas may be linked to this.

Debt

- 4.7. In April, insolvency practitioner Carrington Dean found that on average Renfrewshire residents have £17,050 worth of personal debt, higher than the Scottish figure of £16,133. Including mortgages, the Money Charity found that the average total debt per household is £65,661. They also found that debt rates had increased for individuals over the year to the end of July 2023, with adults on average owing £702 more this year than last.
- 4.8. According to the August Commons Library briefing, people are using savings and debt to pay for essentials because of the rising cost of living. Debt advice charities like Stepchange and Citizens Advice are reporting an increase in debt advice clients. An ONS survey shows that of the 56% of adults who saw an increase in their cost of living in July-August 2023 compared to the month before, 19% reported using more credit than usual as a result.
- 4.9. Outstanding credit card debt across the UK to July 23 averaged £2376 per household and £1248 per adult. This is an increase of 8% on the previous year. According to Which? Credit card holders who fail to pay their statement in full could be paying the highest interest in more than 27 years, with average rates hitting 23.8% in September, up from 21.89% a year before. On a credit card with the average interest rate the average debt would take 26 years and 3 months to repay for someone making only the minimum repayments each month.
- 4.10. Which? has also found that the cost of borrowing has increased, with the average interest rate for a £5000 loan taken out over 3 years being 10.8% in October 2023 compared to 6.9% in December 2021. Loan repayments now would be £162.04 per month, compared with £153.68, meaning in total an extra £300 would be paid over the term of the loan.



Source: Which? analysis of Moneyfacts data

- 4.11. Advice agencies are noticing an increase in those who are working coming forward for support both around debt, and for advice more generally. Step Change has seen the percentage of clients in work coming forward increase to 44% in August from 42% in July. Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau report a significant increase in the number of debt clients in full time work (35% increase). The Bureau has also seen an increase in the numbers of those with debt issues generally who are coming forward for support at 363 this quarter against 268 for the same quarter last year.
- 4.12. The Council's Advice Works service has seen a rise in the numbers of clients who are working full time. In their Quarter 1, to 30 June 2023, more clients who were working full time were seen, than those working part time at 97 compared to 74, with 11 self employed people also coming forward. They have also noted an increase in foodbank vouchers being given to those in work.
- 4.13. Renfrewshire Affordable Credit Alliance are currently carrying out a survey on savings, borrowing and debt, which we hope will provide useful information and help paint a picture of borrowing, including illegal borrowing across Renfrewshire. Results of this will be brought to a future Board.

5. Housing costs

- 5.1. According to the ONS, private rental prices have continued to grow across the whole of the UK. Overall rental prices have increased 5.7% in the year to September 2023. Their latest research indicated that just over 4 in 10 (43%) adults in Great Britain paying rent or a mortgage said they were finding the payments very or somewhat difficult to afford. This has increased from 30% during a similar period last year. 40% of rent and mortgage payers stated that their payments had increased in the last 6 months.
- 5.2. According to data from Pay.UK and Vocalink, average monthly mortgage payments made by Direct Debit have been rising steadily, from £718 in December 2021 to £880 in September 2023. The proportion of mortgage payments made by Direct Debit which failed because of insufficient funds last month was the highest since May 2023.
- 5.3. Even if the bank interest rate has peaked (which may not be the case), we know the impact of increased mortgage costs is yet to be felt. According to the Resolution Foundation the average interest rate paid by mortgagors is expected to rise from 2 per cent in Q1 2022 to a peak of 4.8 per cent in Q4 2027. They estimate that the average household remortgaging next year will see their annual payments rise by around £3,000.
- 5.4. Research led by the University of Stirling and University of Nottingham, found that when interest rates increased, those who were heavily indebted experienced an increased likelihood of mental health difficulty. While low interest rates encouraged borrowing, mortgage or otherwise, researchers found that for each 1% increase in interest rates, there was a 2.6% increase in the incidence of mental health issues experienced by those heavily in debt. UK-wide, researchers estimated each percentage point increase would result in 20,000 additional cases of mental health difficulty – at an overall cost to society of £156 million.

- 5.5. Since February 2022, the Bank of England's base rate has increased by 4.75%, so this indicates the possibility of at least 95,000* additional cases of mental health difficulty nationwide in relation to interest rate rises not just debt anxiety itself. In November 2023, the Bank Of England Governor said 'it was much too soon to be thinking about cutting rates', and has indicated that there is potential for mortgage interest rates to rise if inflation doesn't fall quickly enough.
- 5.6. A survey carried out on behalf of Mind, found that 29% of the adult population in England and Wales say the increase in mortgage rates has affected their wellbeing. It found that the rise particularly affected young people, with 48% of those aged 16 – 24 saying the mortgage situation had affected their mental health. There is no reason to doubt a similar result in Scotland.

6. Benefits

DWP: Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit claimants

- 6.1. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) published statistics in July 2023 related to the policy that provides support for a maximum of two children in Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit. The two-child limit was implemented in 2017, with benefit entitlement no longer being applicable for third or subsequent children.
- 6.2. The statistics provided a snapshot of the Universal Credit (UC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) caseload in April 2023 across the UK. Nationwide the statistics show:

	Total	Universal Credit	Child Tax Credit
All households in receipt of UC or CTC with three or more children	771,660	481,370	290,290
Affected households (reporting a third or subsequent child on or after 6 April 2017)	421,660	305,420	116,250
Households not receiving a child element/amount for at least one child	409,050	295,620	113,430
Households in receipt of an exception	22,430	17,660	4,780

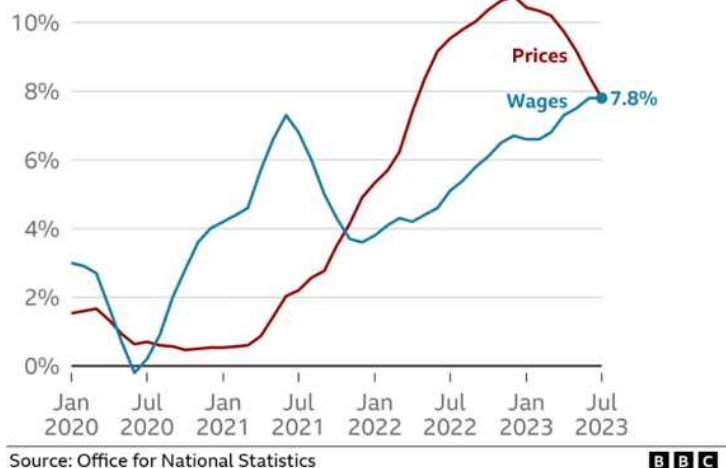
- 6.3. In Renfrewshire, the number of households with 3 or more children with either UC or CTC is 1,350. Previous reports on this subject indicate that to fully mitigate the impact of the limit in Scotland would cost approximately £78m per year based on 2023 figures. In Renfrewshire affected households in financial crisis can apply for a Crisis Grant from the Scottish Welfare Fund, and those with a shortfall in their housing costs can apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP).
- 6.4. It should be noted that some households affected by the two-child limit, may also be affected by the Benefit Cap, which caps total benefit amounts paid to £423.46 per week for couples and lone parents and £283.71 per week for single adults. The Benefit Cap is currently mitigated in full (where possible) by DHP awards.

7. Employment and Wages

- 7.1. The ONS has reported that pay rises are now meeting price growth, however with inflation forecast to remain above 2% in 2024, prices will keep rising, especially for food where inflation rates remain well above where they have been in recent years.

Pay growth matches inflation

Annual wage and price growth, three months to July 2023



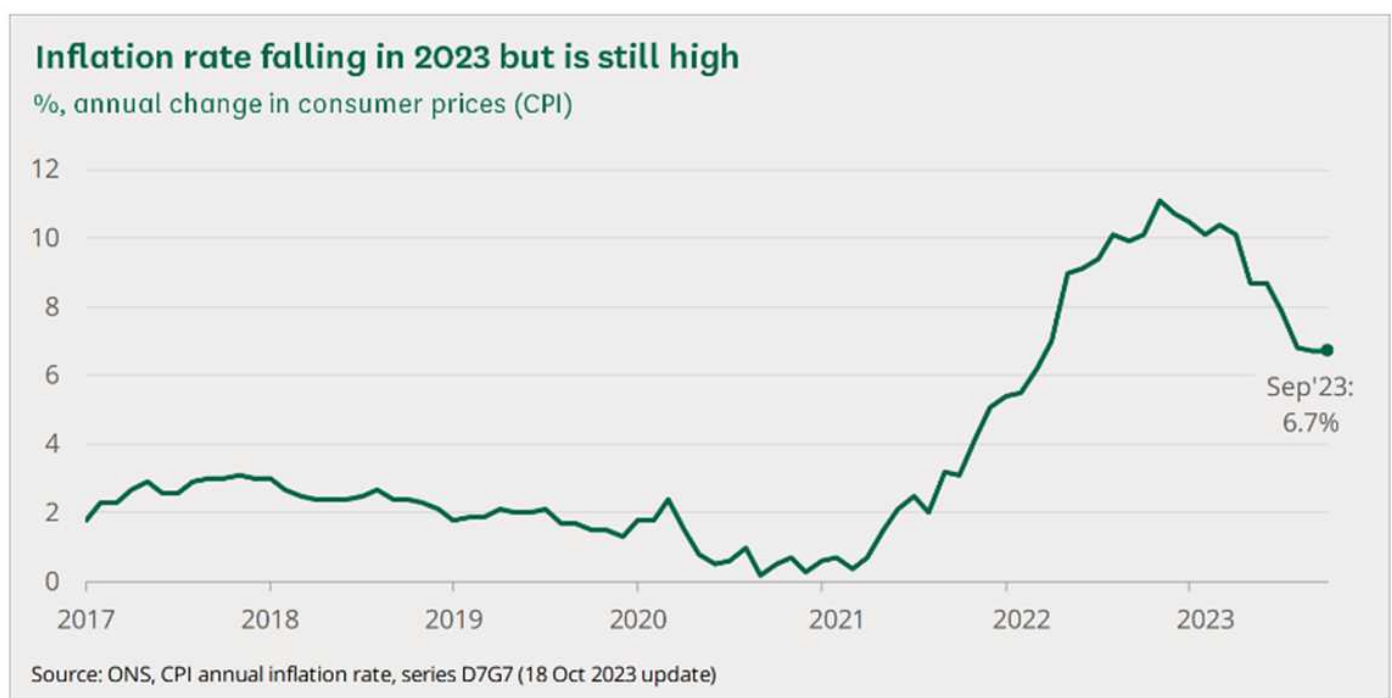
- 7.2. On 24 October an increase in the Real Living Wage to £12 per hour was announced. Employers adhering to the Real Living Wage (as opposed to the national living wage, which is lower) have 6 months (until 1 May 2024) to implement the increase. The previous rate was £10.90, and a full time worker receiving the new rate will receive £3000 more per year than someone receiving the national living wage. By the end of 23/24 Renfrewshire had 85 living wage employers, of which Renfrewshire Council is one.
- 7.3. The Claimant Count for those claiming unemployment-related benefits remained similar in July 23 compared with the previous year at 3.3%. This equates to 3760 people aged between 16 and 64. Those currently receiving Tax Credits have been part of a managed migration to Universal Credit which commenced in August 2023. In May 2023, 14,087 households in Renfrewshire were in receipt of Universal Credit. This will rise until the legacy Tax Credit caseload closes in 2024. This has caused an upturn in individuals in receipt of Tax credits accessing advice in Renfrewshire.

8. Inflation

- 8.1. UK inflation as measured by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) is currently standing at 6.7%, which represents no change from the August figure. According to the ONS, however, it's not a consistent picture across the board, for example, motor fuel is the largest contribution to upward increases in price, while furniture and household goods and food and non-alcoholic beverage inflation rates are showing a downward trend.
- 8.2. Food prices rose by 12.2% in the year to September, down from 14.9% in the year to July. The largest downward contributions in the easing of the annual rate for food and non-alcoholic

beverages between August and September 2023 came from the milk, cheese and eggs as well as soft drinks and juices. Despite easing inflation, the ONS reported that half (50%) of adults across Great Britain say they have spent more than usual to get what they normally buy when food shopping within the past two weeks.

- 8.3. The Bank of England has warned that food inflation is unlikely to fall below 10% by the end of the year as farmers, distributors and food manufacturers costs are continuing to rise at a fast pace. The cool wet summer has also affected UK crops such as wheat and potatoes, which may affect prices.
- 8.4. The increase in price of motor fuels was one of the main contributing factors in the inflation rate remaining static. The average price of petrol rose by 5.1 pence per litre between August and September 2023 to stand at 153.6 pence per litre, with the average price of diesel rising by 6.3 pence per litre to stand at 157.4 pence per litre. Oil prices have increased mainly due to the decision by some oil producing countries who are members of OPEC+ to cut production of crude oil and so increase the price per barrel. This increase in price is then reflected in the retail prices paid at fuel forecourts. The Israel-Gaza crisis may also have consequential impacts on oil prices due to the geo-political volatility in the Middle East.
- 8.5. It is widely predicted that the inflation rate will again fall next month, with it expected that the energy price cap reduction from 1 October 2023 will contribute to see at least a 1 percentage point reduction in the overall inflation rate.



9. Fuel – Energy Support for Households

- 9.1. Support with energy bills will continue until at least March 2024, albeit at a reduced or scaled back level. The price cap applies to most households, and sets the maximum amount that suppliers can charge for a unit of energy. From 1 October 23, a typical dual-fuel household will

pay £1834 per annum. This is a reduction in price per unit for both gas and electricity, however standing charges for electricity have remained static, while those for gas have increased by 3 pence per day.

	Previous energy price per unit 1 July to 30 September 2023	Current energy price per unit 1 October to 31 December 2023
Electricity	30 pence per kWh 53 pence daily standing charge	27 pence per kWh 53 pence daily standing charge
Gas	8 pence per kWh 29 pence daily standing charge	7 pence per kWh 30 pence daily standing charge

- 9.2. The cap is applied to customers on a default energy tariff including those who pay by Direct Debit, standard credit, prepayment meter, or who have an Economy 7 meter. It should be noted that the cap does not limit the total bill, which depends on energy consumption, only the amount charged per unit.
- 9.3. As previously reported to the Committee, the UK Government has also announced that the £400 payment paid to all homes in winter 2022/23 will not be repeated. Instead, support will be provided in three instalments only for those receiving certain means tested benefits.
- 9.4. The second, Autumn instalment of £300 will be paid between 31 October and 19 November, with a further £299 to follow in Spring. In addition a 'Pensioner Cost of Living Payment' of either £150 or £300 will be paid later in the year, along with Winter Fuel payments. The total amount received is based on age and circumstances during a qualifying week in September. The maximum Winter Fuel payment (including the Cost of Living Payment) is £600, and the minimum £250 and those eligible will receive a letter advising how much they are due in October or November.

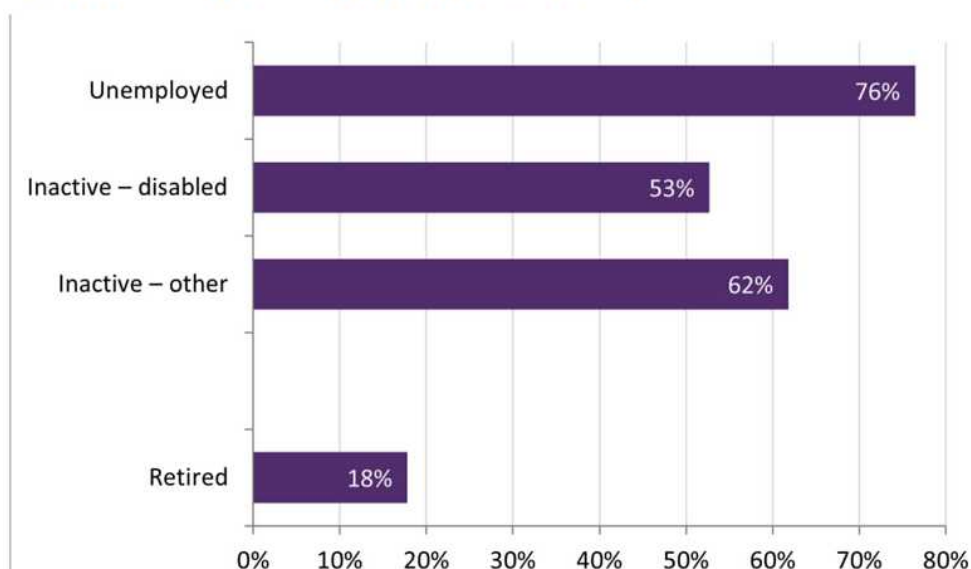
10. Joseph Rowntree Foundation Poverty in Scotland Report 2023

- 10.1. In October, JRF published their Poverty in Scotland report. This report highlights the issue of increasing levels of in-work poverty. It found that over one million people still live in poverty in Scotland, with nearly half of those (490,000) living in very deep poverty and around a quarter being children. Their report also suggests that with inflation rates still high, this winter will be difficult especially for those living in poverty with a continuing struggle to afford essentials for their households.
- 10.2. The report includes analysis of which families are more likely to experience in-work poverty:
- One in four people in working single-parent families are in poverty
 - Larger families, with 3 or more children also face an in-work poverty rate of around one in four

- One in ten people experiencing in work poverty live in couple families with children where both parents work full-time
- Households where someone is disabled or a carer also face an increased risk of in-work poverty.
- Woman are more likely to be on low pay and work part time than men, with career progression also negatively impacted.

- 10.3. The report offers solutions to reducing in work poverty, including employers paying Real living Wage, targeting training and progression to employees on low pay and offering flexible roles.
- 10.4. As discussed throughout this report the issue of in-work poverty is one that seems to be on the rise in Renfrewshire, with the Foodbank and our advice services, including those providing advice around energy, reporting an increase in those who are working, whether full or part time, coming forward for support.
- 10.5. For those who are not working a level of three out of four people in families who are unemployed are living in poverty.

Figure 14: Poverty rate for people in families not in work



Source: JRF analysis of Households Before Average Income

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – There are no financial implications associated with this report, which provides an overview of the position and is for noting.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community/Council Planning** – This report provides a detailed summary of the current evidence relating to household income and expenditure. Wider poverty related issues are a key element of

both the Council and Community Plan and the information included within this report is part of the wider Strategic Needs Assessment for these plans.

4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality and Human Rights** – The report provides an overview of the position around household income and expenditure, and is for noting. As such there are no impacts arising from the recommendation of this paper. It is however important to note that impacts on households explored within this paper are likely to be disproportionately felt by equality groups.
8. **Health and Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** – none
11. **Privacy Impact** – none
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – none
13. **Climate Risk** – none

Author: Diane Dunn, Social Renewal Lead Officer, diane.dunn@renfrewshire.gov.uk



To: Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee

On: 15 November 2023

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Fairer Renfrewshire Programme

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Council and partners have a key focus on tackling inequality and improving wellbeing and have longstanding programmes of work and partnership arrangements in place such as the Tackling Poverty Programme and the change programme established in response to the findings of the Renfrewshire Drug and Alcohol Commission.
- 1.2. Further to this, at Council on 2 March 2023 members reaffirmed their commitment to the Fairer Renfrewshire programme and outlined a number of investments including bringing together the current Fairer Renfrewshire funding alongside the Tackling Poverty and Social Renewal reserve funds into a single resource estimated at £5million.
- 1.3. Work on priorities has continued with this paper containing updates on:
 - Summer of Fun evaluation
 - Advice Services
 - Digital Inclusion
 - Winter Connections Programme
 - School Meal Debt
 - Fairer Renfrewshire Panel

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members of the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee note the report.

3. Background

- 3.1 As highlighted in Section 1, the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme brings together a number of existing programmes of work focussed on achieving fairness and equity, including the former

Tackling Poverty Programme and Alcohol and Drugs Change Programme. These programmes are being brought together alongside the Council's Social Renewal Plan, mapping a fairer future for Renfrewshire's residents through the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

3.2. There are four key emerging themes which are shared across all elements of the Fairer Renfrewshire programme, and these are:

- Improving financial security
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Building community capacity and resilience
- Listening to lived experience

3.3 Section 4 of this report provides an update on projects for information.

4. Fairer Renfrewshire Programme

Summer of Fun Evaluation

- 4.1. In March 2023, core funding of £100,000 was allocated through the Fairer Renfrewshire programme to support the development of a summer holiday programme, with a focus on providing support over the holiday period to low-income families. £20,000 of funding was also allocated from the Future Paisley programme to enhance cultural experiences for low-income households.
- 4.2. In late June 2023, Renfrewshire received a further £120,655 from the Scottish Government as part of their national programme to enhance summer holiday and food provision. This funding was targeted at providing access to activities, childcare and food during the summer holiday period for school age children from low-income families. This brought the funding total to £240,655 allocated to Renfrewshire's Summer of Fun programme.
- 4.3. A diverse programme was developed to deliver a range of activities for children, families, and young people across Renfrewshire to access over the holidays. This was developed and co-ordinated jointly by the Community Learning and Development and Partnerships and Inequalities team within the Chief Executive's Service, in consultation with the Fairer Renfrewshire sub-committee and the Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel. A separate paper on the programme is provided as part of the agenda for this meeting.

Advice Services

- 4.4. Income advice is a key support for households facing financial insecurity, with advice workers able to advise on issues such as benefit entitlement, debt management and budgeting. The Council's Advice Works service provides free, confidential and independent advice on a range of money and debt issues. At the request of the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel, staff from Advice Works attended a Panel session in October to discuss better access and promotion of advice services

and explain what their services does, including confidentiality and independence from other Council services.

Special Needs in Pregnancy service

- 4.5. As previously reported to the Sub-Committee, Renfrewshire Council has been working with Renfrewshire HSCP, NHS GGC and Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau to develop a pilot for an advice and advocacy service within the Special Needs in Pregnancy service (SNIPs) at the Royal Alexandra Hospital and apply for external funding for this service. Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau were recently successful in an application to the National Lottery Improving Lives Fund, and have been awarded £95,000 to run a pilot of the service for one year.
- 4.6. The service, called Stronger Start, will work with pregnant women who have complex needs, including alcohol or substance misuse; medical issues – being HIV positive or having a current mental health problem, who are under 16 or those disengaged from mainstream maternity services and where there are child protection concerns.
- 4.7. It is intended to offer both income maximisation advice, but also individual support and advocacy around a range of issues and will also develop robust referral pathways with partners in the public and third sectors. Due to the geographical area the RAH works across, the service will cover Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire families too.
- 4.8. A Steering Group formed from Renfrewshire Citizens Advice, Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire HSCP along with NHS GGC and Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire HSCPs are now working to put the service in place with a provisional date of January 2024.

School Support Service

- 4.9. The School Support service provided by Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau commenced on at the start of the school year, with the first appointments week commencing 23 August. From that date until the October week, 50 appointments had been attended across schools, with numbers around 6 per week. The final week before the holidays showed a marked increase to 12 appointments.
- 4.10. Reasons for appointments have been varied, with advice and support provided around benefits including Child and Adult Disability Payments and Universal Credit as well as Further Education, Energy Advice and JizhfytsR frsyjsfshj%ff | fshj%JR F.3
- 4.11. A meeting has been organised for mid-November to review the service to date and make any changes necessary to processes and arrange better promotion in schools where there have been fewer appointments.

Digital Inclusion

- 4.12. In December 2021, Leadership Board allocated £100,000 to support work around digital inclusion. £80,000 of this sum was allocated to OneRen to co-ordinate a Digital Champions programme,

with a further £20,000 allocated to support further research and evaluation in digital exclusion in partnership with SCVO and a community device refurbishment initiative. In addition to the funding support, the new Digital Delivery Manager, in post since July, has been working with the existing Digital partnerships in Renfrewshire to better understand the digital landscape in Renfrewshire and develop a person-centred approach to meet digital need.

4.13. One of these partnerships, Renfrewshire's Citizens Voice Forum, was established in 2021, and is led by Renfrewshire Council in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). The Forum seeks to mitigate digital exclusion through co-designing digital inclusion solutions with partners, which include:

- To recruit a Digital Champions Coordinator to recruit and train digital champions and thereafter build a network of digital champions;
- To develop and implement DigiZones; and
- To explore the creation of a device recycling / refurbishment organisation with the possibility of providing employment opportunities.

Citizens Voice members are also currently considering developing a hyper-local broadband social tariff campaign in order to raise awareness and uptake of Broadband Social Tariffs.

4.14. Using the £80,000 allocated, and with support from Citizens Voice, OneRen recruited a Digital Champion Coordinator in May 2023 for a two year period. To date, the Coordinator has trained five digital champions, who have in turn supported 60+ learners with over 50 hours spent supporting learners. Plans are being progressed to establish a Digital Champions Network in early 2024, whereby bringing Digital Champions together, enabling them to share, learn, support and collaborate with each other with the aim of benefitting learners / end users.

4.15. A sub-group of Citizens Voice has also been working to introduce the DigiZone initiative. DigiZones will be locations within Renfrewshire where any member of the public can connect to the internet as a minimum, but may also be able to gain digital skills support and access devices. Starting with OneRen libraries, it is intended that partner organisations will sign up to become a DigiZone, advertising which digital supports they can provide.

4.16. The DigiZone Sub-Group is working with the Council's Marketing and Communications Team to develop a brand identity for Digizones as well as develop onboarding materials for organisations along with a monitoring and evaluation framework.

4.17. With regard to the community device refurbishment initiative, a Device Recycling Sub-Group (of Citizens Voice Forum) has been set up and has undertaken a scoping exercise to understand device recycling and refurbishment organisations operating across Scotland. This work builds on work being progressed by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) at a national level who hosted an event in Stirling in September, bringing together such organisations.

4.18. The Sub-Group are currently working with an Ayrshire-based Device Recycling/Refurbishment Charity, who has expressed an interest in having a presence and supporting digital inclusion in

Renfrewshire. The Charity is currently being supported via Engage Renfrewshire and Council Services to seek appropriate premises to operate from and potential funding opportunities to apply to. The Council's Economic Development team are also working with the organisation to see where there's a fit with employability.

- 4.19. Renfrewshire's #DigiRen network also supports digital and data equity, whilst ensuring no-one is left behind. #DigiRen comprises 150 local and national organisations representing the Public, and third sectors including Social Housing and also has members representing the Academia Sector, sharing a common goal of closing the digital and data divide in Renfrewshire (and beyond). #DigiRen is a collaboration space for partners and organisations to share information and best practice on digital inclusion, learn from each other, support initiatives and each other and help grow both the Network and organisations. The group is jointly chaired by Engage Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire Council.

Winter Connections

- 4.20. After the success of the Winter Connections programme in 2022/23, the new programme for winter 23/24 has launched, with the fund opening to applications at the end of September. The fund comprises £75,000 from the Fairer Renfrewshire budget with a further £10,000 from the Recovery Change Programme to reduce stigma and to make sure activities are accessible to people in recovery from mental health issues or alcohol and drug use.
- 4.21. Like last year, organisations are able to bid for up to £2000 to provide activities which are:
- Open, free and easy to access
 - Inclusive, welcoming, respectful, and safe
 - Able or willing to provide connections to other services and supports
 - Able to offer warm drinks/snacks/food along with activities, where possible
- 4.22. A Panel comprising Renfrewshire Council, Renfrewshire HSCP and Engage Renfrewshire has been set up to scrutinise applications and make recommendations to the Head of Policy and Partnerships, who has been delegated authority to make decisions on funding to support speedy distribution of funds.
- 4.23. To the end of October, 30 applications for funding have been made, with the panel looking at range and time of activities as well as geographical split before making recommendations to ensure coverage is as wide as possible across Renfrewshire.
- 4.24. Officers are also working with OneRen Libraries to extend provision of a range of activities across all Renfrewshire libraries as last year, and in addition allow libraries to offer hot drinks to all those attending the library.

5. Participation and engagement

Lived experience panel

- 5.1. The Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee has been given a number of updates relating to work of the Fairer Renfrewshire panel. Since the last Sub-Committee meeting, the Panel have met with officers from the Council around Net Zero, with their ideas around actions feeding into the Plan for Net Zero workshop which took place on 11 October. As outlined above, they also met with Advice Works to discuss barriers to seeking advice, and better promotion of advice services.
- 5.2. Some changes have taken place within membership of the Panel, with members leaving due to health issues, and one due to a conflict of interest as they became a member of the STAR Project Board. Two new members have been recruited, and recruitment will continue to bring the panel back up to full membership. The Panel will continue to meet, with Council communications and child poverty being amongst the topics planned for Panel input before Christmas.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – There are no financial implications associated with this report.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community/Council Planning** – The Fairer Renfrewshire Programme is a key driver in achieving the ‘Fair’ strategic outcome and theme within the Council Plan, and covers a number of the key actions identified in the plan. It also represents a significant partnership programme of work which supports the ‘Fair’ theme within the Community Plan, with dedicated partnership governance being established to ensure alignment between these areas of work.
4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality and Human Rights** – Equality and human rights are a key pillar of this plan, and it is anticipated that the programme will likely advance equality of opportunity.
8. **Health and Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** – none
11. **Privacy Impact** – none
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – none
13. **Climate Risk** – none

Author: Diane Dunn, Lead Officer Fairer Renfrewshire Programme



To: Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee

On: 15 November 2023

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: School Meal Debt

1. Summary

- 1.1 In early 2023, members of the sub-committee requested further information in relation to school meal debt in Renfrewshire, with a focus on understanding how the issue is handled and what level of support is provided to families that may be experiencing financial insecurity. Officers from the Policy and Partnerships team raised this issue through the Fairer Renfrewshire Officer Group and were advised of ongoing work that was underway to review local arrangements in relation to school meal debt, in response to the findings of a local internal audit review of related processes and systems, and emerging national guidance and policy developments in relation to school meal debt.
 - 1.2 In the intervening period, there have been a range of policy developments at a national level, following a study undertaken by Aberlour and new best practice principles for the management of school meal debt which have been published by COSLA.
 - 1.3 As reported to Leadership Board in June 2023, it is important that any review of school meal debt management supports local partnership activities to tackle the level of financial insecurity and poverty which is being faced by low-income families in Renfrewshire. This paper provides an initial update for members on the work that has been undertaken locally to review existing school meal debt processes and sets out next steps in terms of implementing a more holistic approach to school meal debt management in Renfrewshire. The report also advises elected members of the write-off of historic school meal debt that has been actioned by the Director of Finance and Resources under delegated authority.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Fairer Renfrewshire sub-committee note:
- the update provided on the review of school meal debt processes which is currently being progressed.
 - that further engagement work is proposed with the Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel to strengthen this work.
 - that, under his delegated authority, the Director of Finance and Resources has written off the sum of £47,573.25 of invoiced school meal debt.
 - and that a further update on the implementation of the revised school meal debt process will be submitted to the sub-committee in early 2024.
-

3. Background

- 3.1 In 2022, children's charity Aberlour conducted research into the prevalence of school meal debt in Scotland. They published a series of reports outlining their findings and conclusions based on information collated from local authorities in 2021 and 2022, including a specific report prepared for the Scottish Parliament's Social Injustice and Social Security Committee on low income and debt. The report, entitled "[Robbing Peter to pay Paul: Low Income and the Debt Trap](#)", estimated that there were around 25,000 children in Scotland whose families had some level of debt because they could not afford to pay for school meals. The report also noted that school meal debt in Scotland was over £1m in mid-2022.
- 3.2 The report made several recommendations for Scottish Government, COSLA, and local authorities in relation to school meal debt:
- We recommend that the Scottish Government works with COSLA and local authorities to write-off individual school meal debt to allow families a clean slate as they move into the new school year and possible new school setting.
 - We urge the Scottish Government to implement its free school meal expansion as soon as possible.
 - We recommend that COSLA works with local authorities on a national school meal policy, which is founded on human rights and removes stigma, to ensure that children are treated with dignity in a consistent and fair way.
- 3.3 Whilst a number of these recommendations continue to be discussed at a national policy level, COSLA began by undertaking a survey of current policy and processes across local authorities. COSLA recognised that responding to the findings of the Aberlour report could be challenging for local authorities in light of the current financial context in which they are operating, and that there needed to be flexibility for local authorities to respond in ways that meet local need and also align to existing programmes of work.
- 3.4 To assist and inform local policy decisions, COSLA worked with partners to publish a number of best practice principles for the management of school meal debt in February 2023:

- The design and implementation of school meal debt policy should support the needs, rights and welfare of children and families at the centre, and consideration should be given as to how the views of children and families could inform policy;
- The approach to school meal debt management should be compassionate, proportionate and minimise stigma;
- Processes should be clear and accessible;
- The approach to developing and implementing an approach should be co-ordinated across all council services;
- Local authorities should set a threshold at which unpaid meals become 'debt';
- Local authorities should consider routine reviews of debt levels to minimise the risk of any family accruing a large debt;
- Communication practice around school meal debt should be reviewed to ensure information is appropriate and timely;
- Local authorities should be promoting and maximising uptake of free school meals and other available support (such as clothing grants and free bus travel);
- When staff become aware of debt accruing, they should signpost/refer families to appropriate services for support;
- Local authorities should consider how they could use their discretionary powers on free school meal provision to support families experiencing financial hardship;
- Local authorities should retain discretion over whether to write-off any school meal debts;
- Local authorities should consider which other mechanisms could be used to support families and/or clear debts, including discretionary use of Pupil Equity Funding.

3.5 Councils across Scotland have responded in different ways to this guidance, with some bringing forward proposals to write off school meal debt on a one-off basis, whilst others like Renfrewshire have taken a whole system approach to the management and treatment of school meal debt. As reported to Leadership Board in June 2023:

Work has commenced in Renfrewshire to review current processes and policy in relation to the management of school meal debt. In line with the COSLA principles and the focus of our local Fairer Renfrewshire programme, proposals are being developed for consideration by elected members which would seek to remove the issue of school meal debt for vulnerable families living in Renfrewshire. This will include actions to improve the efficiency of systems used and most importantly ensure that support is provided within the school environment to families who may be experiencing issues, at the earliest opportunity and in as non-stigmatising and supportive a way as possible.

A key element of the COSLA principles being considered in the local review, is the opportunity to write off current debt accrued by our most vulnerable families, with a particular focus on those families as being at most risk of poverty. A specific proposal will be brought forward for approval as close as possible to the start of the new academic term in order to address this issue at start of the school year, with ongoing outreach and preventative work also to be progressed through the schools advice models which will be piloted.

- 3.6 This paper provides an overview of the work undertaken to date on this issue, the development of outreach and advice models to support families experiencing financial insecurity and confirms proposals for debt write off by the Director of Finance and Resources.
-

4. How school meal payments are managed in Renfrewshire

- 4.1 As elected members will be aware free school meal entitlement has now been rolled out for all pupils across Scotland in P1-P5, with work being undertaken to expand this further in line with Scottish Government policy. For all children, payment for school meals is handled through an online system which supports “cashless catering” across schools and early years establishments.
- 4.2 In 2021, Renfrewshire Council completed the roll-out of a new Online School Payments Cashless Catering system in all its schools and early years establishments. This system, known as Parent Pay, operates by having parents put funds in the relevant account and each pupil’s purchases of school catering are then paid for from that account. The Parent Pay system allowed for a complete overview of school debt for the first time; prior to implementation, each school maintained its own records.
- 4.3 The system is credited each day with a sum covering the cost of the lunchtime meal where a pupil is in receipt of a free school meal. The system is automatically updated from the schools SEEMIS system every day so that any new entitlements are added to Parent Pay accounts as swiftly as possible.
- 4.4 Upon implementation, Parent Pay did not have any upper limit on spend applied to it, which made it possible for debt to be accrued quickly. Account balances are visible to catering staff at the point of purchase, and they advise pupils when their balance is low; pupils who are not in receipt of free school meals are not able to buy morning items if there are no funds in the account.
- 4.5 Renfrewshire Council has a policy of never allowing a child to go hungry at lunchtimes and a plated meal option will always be available even if there are no funds in the account. If this is the case for two days, catering staff notify the school’s pastoral support staff.
- 4.6 As part of the process, Head Teachers have also had discretion over how any Parent Pay debt is managed. Weekly reports are available to all schools which identify where debts are accruing, though account balances can be viewed at any time. At this stage, pastoral staff should contact families to ascertain the circumstances and if appropriate, signpost them to council services such as Advice Works, who can advise on maximising income, applying for free school meals and other supports. The Head Teacher has authority to use their budget to allow the debt to be waived in particular circumstances.
- 4.7 Local authorities also have discretionary power to grant free school meal provision outside of the statutory criteria.

- 4.8 The original process implemented in 2021 transferred debts from Parent Pay to the Council's Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP) once an invoice was raised. Non-payment would then trigger the sundry debt recovery processes which involves passing unpaid debts to the Council's collection agent if they remain unpaid after the timetable for recovery has passed. The collection agent has no powers to take any form of legal recovery action but will contact a customer regarding any unpaid debt. In order to pursue legal action, a court decree would be required, and the Council has never sought to obtain a decree in relation to school meal debt. In light of the current review of school meal debt, the use of a collection agent for school meal debt has been paused.
- 4.9 The Council's Internal Audit team undertook an audit of the "Unpaid Meals Management process" relating to school meal debt in early 2023 and found that not all schools were implementing it effectively or consistently. A range of recommendations were made for action by relevant Council services, and it was agreed that a full end to end review for school meal debt would be progressed.
-

5. Review of School Meal Debt

- 5.1 Children's Services are currently engaging with other council services in order to review and refresh the school meal debt process from end to end. It is important that this approach is taken in order to fully recognise and respond to the best practice guidance produced by COSLA, and specifically to ensure that the management of school meal debt is undertaken as part of our wider partnership response to tackling poverty and inequality for low-income families across Renfrewshire. Officers are currently reviewing existing processes to ensure that they minimise the level of debt which can be incurred and that there is a supportive response when debt arising is identified by our systems and staff.
- 5.2 It is anticipated that the updated process will be implemented in early 2024, and as outlined above, debt management and recovery processes have been paused whilst this work is finalised. To date the focus of the review has been on:
- The system triggers that will be in place which will allow any potential support requirements or financial difficulties to be flagged to school staff for action.
 - The offer of support that will be made to families and parents experiencing financial difficulties through Advice Works and new school advice models being implemented in Renfrewshire.
 - The communication materials which will be used when contacting parents or carers to discuss school meal debt and to offer support as part of a debt management process.
- 5.3 It is important that any new processes implemented recognise the impact of financial insecurity on local families, and the stigma and challenges that arise as a result. A request has been made to the Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel to engage with officers on the review work undertaken, in order to strengthen our approach further.

- 5.4 In terms of links to the wider Fairer Renfrewshire programme, officers have been considering anecdotal evidence which suggests that pupils in receipt of free school meals may be accruing debt because they use the funds in their account to purchase food outside lunchtime. This is possible because payments are credited to Parent Pay accounts each morning for free school meal provision. Options are being developed in response to this issue, which include the related consideration of breakfast club provision in Renfrewshire. This will be reported to members as part of wider Fairer Renfrewshire proposals in early 2024.
-

6. Advice and support for families experiencing financial insecurity.

- 6.1 As outlined in previous updates to the Leadership Board on this issue, it is important that any revised school meal debt process proactively responds to financial insecurity issues being experienced by families fully, rather than solely concentrating on one-off measures such as write-offs as a response. As part of the Council's wider Fairer Renfrewshire Programme, there is a strong focus on providing support to low-income families and reaching out to provide support proactively through our local advice services, with new approaches being piloted across our learning establishments. There is a clear opportunity to ensure all of the support that is available for families is aligned to the new process when this is implemented.
- 6.2 For example, the new School Support Service, provided by Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau, is now operating in all Renfrewshire secondary schools. It embeds advice workers in our schools and can take referrals for pupils aged 16 and over, parents and carers, and school staff. The service has been operational since August 2023, and is an additional resource to support children, young people and families.
- 6.3 The Council's Advice Works service is also developing a Family Advice Service to complement this; it will work alongside our early years and primary school settings and focus on helping families with younger children maximise their income and increase take-up of Council supports such as clothing grants.
-

7. Debt Write-off

- 7.1 It is recognised in the COSLA guidance that local authorities may also wish to consider their local response to the Aberlour review recommendations on the write-off of school meal debt. As noted above, whilst the review of the current school meal debt processes is underway, no new invoices for accrued debt will be issued. For those cases where an invoice has already been issued, the Director of Finance and Resources will use his delegated authority to write-off the debt. The amount to be written off is £47,573.25.
- 7.2 An additional £44,853.87 of debt has been accrued on Parent Pay as at the October 2023 school break and has not yet been invoiced or passed to a recovery/debt management stage. No invoices will be raised whilst the process review is underway; as noted above, the review will give consideration as to how this debt is to be managed in the future.

8. Next Steps

- 8.1 Council services will continue to work together on a revised school meal debt process, which will retain an emphasis on pastoral support and appropriate signposting and referrals to services which can support families experiencing financial insecurity.
- 8.2 As outlined above, a request has been made to the Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel to support the review process and to ensure it strengthens opportunities to support families as well as reducing stigma.
- 8.3 A further update will be provided to the sub-committee in early 2024 on the implementation of the revised process for school meal debt.

Implications of the Report

- 1. **Financial** – The cost of writing off the debt outlined within the report will be met from bad debt provisions maintained by the Council.
- 2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none.
- 3. **Community/Council Planning** – The issues raised in this report relate to the Council Plan theme “Fair” and the Community Plan theme “Fair”. “Supporting low-income families” is one of three focus areas for the Community Plan.
- 4. **Legal** – none
- 5. **Property/Assets** – none
- 6. **Information Technology** – none
- 7. **Equality & Human Rights** – The decision to write-off debts has no negative impact on any group at this time. Any changes to council policy in relation to unpaid meals debt will be impact assessed by the responsible service in line with the statutory requirements.
- 8. **Health & Safety** – none
- 9. **Procurement** – none
- 10. **Risk** – none
- 11. **Privacy Impact** – none

12. **COSLA Policy Position** – COSLA has provided national guidance on this issue, as detailed in Section 4 of the report.
13. **Climate Change** – none

List of Background Papers: none

Author: *Lisa Fingland, Service Planning & Policy Development Manager,
lisa.fingland@renfrewshire.gov.uk*



To: Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-committee

On: 15 November 2023

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Summer of Fun 2023 Evaluation

1. Summary

- 1.1 Further to previous presentations to the sub-committee, this paper provides an update to members on the initial findings gathered through evaluation work on the Summer of Fun programme which the sub-committee played a critical role in shaping the format of for Summer 2023.
- 1.2 As detailed in the paper and in the full report attached as Appendix 1, initial information indicates that the programme was successful in reaching low-income families, particularly those families who are in the child poverty priority groups who may be underserved by mainstream holiday programmes. The wide range of activities on offer ensured that children were able to try new experiences and visit new places.
- 1.3 Further discussion and engagement will now take place with the Lived Experience Panel to consider the initial evaluation information that is available. Officers are also contributing to national evaluation work being undertaken in relation to the Scottish Government funding provided.
- 1.4 Options for future holiday programmes will be developed going forward, informed by the views of members of the sub-committee.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are invited to consider and discuss the content of the Evaluation of the Summer of Fun Programme report.

3. Background

- 3.1 Work commenced in March 2023 to deliver a summer holiday programme in Renfrewshire. Core funding of £100,000 was initially allocated to support this programme through the Fairer Renfrewshire programme, with a focus on providing support over the holiday period to low-income families. £20,000 of funding was also allocated from the Future Paisley programme to enhance cultural experiences over the summer period for low-income households.
- 3.2 In late June 2023, £4m of funding was announced by the Scottish Government to enhance summer holiday and food provision nationally. Renfrewshire was allocated £120,655 for this purpose. This brought the total funding available to the programme to £240,655.
- 3.3 Initially it was agreed that £25,000 of the £100,000 Fairer Renfrewshire funding available, would be allocated to support a small grants fund pilot for local community groups and organisations to operate for Summer 2023. This was topped up to £55,000 once Scottish Government funding was confirmed.
- 3.4 The Scottish Government did not provide formal guidance for summer programming for 2023, instead, Local Authorities were asked to draw on the principles and policy intent from the 2022 guidance, namely targeted access to activities, childcare and food during the summer holiday period for school age children from low-income families.
- 3.5 Following engagement with the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee and specifically with the Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel, it was agreed that the summer 2023 programme should operate based on a set of key principles including:
- There should be a range of activities for children and families – a mixture of child only, family activities, free/chargeable and across several different communities in Renfrewshire;
 - The Council will work with partners to promote the variety of activities that are available – making sure that families know what is on and where;
 - The core focus of the funding will be to provide activities which support families from the child poverty priority groups and to target gaps in provision across localities;
 - Any activities funded through Fairer Renfrewshire should be free at the point of access with free food or snacks available depending on the length of the activity.
- 3.6 Using these principles, a multi-faceted and diverse programme was developed to deliver a range of activities for children, families, and young people across

Renfrewshire to access over the holidays. This was developed and co-ordinated jointly by the Community Learning and Development and Partnerships and Inequalities team within the Chief Executive's service. This included:

- Summer camps organised by the Council's Community Learning and Development Team
- Family activities provided by Community Learning and Development Teams.
- Activities and support for families with children with Additional Support Needs (ASN)
- Evening activities delivered by Street Stuff
- Activities in libraries provided by OneRen
- A programme of activities provided by community partners
- A communications campaign to promote all activities available over the summer in Renfrewshire.

- 3.7 The aim was to develop a programme of integrated provision to address the barriers and isolation faced by people in the most deprived areas, concentrating on the Scottish Government's 6 main priority groups, who are especially vulnerable to falling into poverty: lone parent families, ethnic minority families, those with a disability, mothers under 25, those with a child under 1, those with more than 3 children. There was a strong focus on working closely with services such as Children's Services Social Work, Education and other partners to identify families and young people within those groups and to signpost them towards and sign them up for universal activities.

4 Participation Outcomes

- 4.1 Each element of the programme will be fully evaluated to find out what worked well in terms of activities and to gain understanding of the impact of the programme. Initial information gathered indicates that very positive outcomes have been achieved in terms of participation and engagement of participants:

- **4,500** children attended the summer camps over the holiday period, and over 45% of children who attended were from lone parent families, over 42% were from large families and over a quarter were from families where a family member has a disability.
- **190** families were able to access support through the summer camp activities offered for young people with Additional Support Needs, with a further **14** young people from Mary Russell being supported on a weekly basis.

- There were **1858** attendances at Street Stuff activities provided over the summer across 7 locations.
- **47** families participated in summer family learning activities with the adult learning team.
- It is estimated that **739 adults and 1,921** children benefited from the Summer of Fun grant funded activities in the community.
- **412 children and 74 adults attended** Future Paisley funded sessions. All three projects provided opportunities for children and young people to access the benefits of art, music and creativity without any financial barriers and were successful in attracting families within the child poverty priority groups.

4.2 Figures show that Summer of Fun funding contributed to increased footfall to Renfrewshire libraries, but it should be noted that this was not the only factor. An overall total of 56,824 physical attendances in the summer months of 2023 at all public libraries represents an increase of 65% from the same period in 2022, up from 34,461. The number of events increased by 74%, up from 448 to 779, while physical attendances at events by adults and children increased by 162% from 4,501 to 11,794.

4.3 Initial evidence and information collected indicates very positive feedback in terms of the variety and quality of the programme. Full detail is provided in Appendix 1 – however several quotes from participating children, families and organisations are provided below which clearly demonstrate the positive impact that participation has had:

Both my kids love attending Street Stuff-wouldn't change anything! My kids have loved the introduction of hot lunches this year. We are very lucky to have this in our community thank you.

*Given me time with other adults and made the holidays less isolating
(Johnstone mum)*

*The kids came out of their shell, being with other families helped so much
(Paisley mum)*

The programme was hugely successful for us. We were inundated and had a waiting list. All the families involved said that it helped their children's confidence and boosted their interest in music. Many stated that they would love their child to attend regular classes if they were affordable. Some children who attended were from families who did not previously have access to music and could not afford music activities.

75% of the parents we support in Renfrewshire identify as having mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, or perinatal mental health. We know that those

we work with have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic... The increase in cost of living also affects the families we support unduly. Moving forward we anticipate an ongoing legacy of heightened anxiety over finances, increased loneliness, and poor self-esteem.

5 Interim key findings

5.1 Appendix 1 provides detailed information that has been collected as part of the initial evaluation work on the programme. This has been analysed and key findings have been identified as follows:

- Access to free, inclusive and enjoyable activities alongside provision of a healthy snack or lunch contributed to a successful Summer of Fun programme. The wide range of activities on offer ensured that children were able to try new experiences and visit new places.
- The Summer of Fun programme provided children with the opportunity to learn new skills, make friends, be creative, gain confidence and make memories with their families.
- There is strong evidence that activities reached and benefited low-income families, in particular larger families, lone parents, families with disabilities and families with children aged under one year old.
- Apart from providing free fun activities that low-income families could access, benefits of the Summer of Fun programme included encouraging new people to engage with organisations and helping to reduce costs for families over the long summer holiday.
- Parents enjoyed being able to spend time playing together with their children without the pressure of having to come up with ideas to keep them entertained or having to consider any financial considerations. Their children benefited from having opportunities to mix with other children and to enjoy activities that they may not have been able to do at home, including trying new foods at lunchtime.
- Some participating organisations suggested that consideration should be given to providing additional and targeted funding to increase the capacity of organisations to deliver a wider range of activities for a longer period or on an ongoing basis. This was particular the case for some activities which children and young people had enjoyed and could continue further with.
- The importance of summer activity provision in maintaining continuity of support to families that are regularly working with local organisations was also

highlighted as positive benefit and should also be considered for any future programmes.

- Early discussions with colleagues in Children's Services Social Work and Education were crucial to ensuring that activities were targeted to those most vulnerable in Renfrewshire. This included dialogue with the Kinship Team and a referral process set up for families who were identified as unable to access the online booking system. This was a key positive and is something that could be built on further if future programmes were undertaken.

6 Next steps

- 6.1 The information gathered to date will be shared and discussed internally with the Fairer Renfrewshire Officer Group and has also been reported to the Communities and Housing Board given the important role played by the Community Learning and Development teams in delivering the programme.
- 6.2 As previously agreed by the sub-committee, the initial findings are also being presented to allow for further discussion with elected members on the potential delivery of future holiday programmes. Scottish Government funding has now formally ended in its current format, and it is unlikely that any future allocations made in relation to summer programmes will be at the level provided as part of COVID recovery funding.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial –**
Funding to deliver the Summer of Fun programme was funded by Fairer Renfrewshire, Future Paisley, and Scottish Government.
2. **HR & Organisational Development –** none.
3. **Community/Council Planning –**
The multi-agency, universal and targeted work developed and delivered across Renfrewshire throughout the summer holidays as part of the National summer holiday and activities initiative contributed to key areas of activity relevant to Community Planning priorities and Renfrewshire's Council Plan strategic outcomes; outlined below.
 - Our Renfrewshire is well - Supporting the wellness and resilience of our citizens and communities.
 - Our Renfrewshire is fair - addressing the inequalities that limit life chances.
 - Reshaping our place, our economy, and our future - Promoting learning and skills for life.
 - Building strong, safe, and resilient communities - Empowering communities and Delivering community-based services.

- Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all – Promoting skills and learning for life, Celebrating youth! Improving mental health and wellbeing; Addressing health inequalities; and promoting active lifestyles.
4. **Legal** – none.
 5. **Property/Assets** - none.
 6. **Information Technology** - none.
 7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
 8. **Health & Safety** - none.
 9. **Procurement** – none.
 10. **Risk** - none.
 11. **Privacy Impact** - none.
 12. **COSLA Policy Position** –not applicable.
 13. **Climate Risk** – not applicable.

List of Background Papers

None



An evaluation of the Summer of Fun Programme

This funding has played an important role in supporting our small charity so that we could provide fun and creative opportunities to children, young people and families in our community – thank you!

Paisley YMCA

Contents

1.	Executive Summary	3
2.	About Summer of Fun	6
3.	Renfrewshire Summer of Fun Programme	7
4.	The Summer of Fun Small Grants Fund	14
5.	Evaluating the Summer of Fun programme	18
	How many people attended?	23
	What difference did the Summer of Fun programme make?	25
	What worked well?	27
6.	Conclusions	29
	Appendix 1 – Organisations which provided Summer of Fun activities	32
	Appendix 2 – Case Studies	33

1. Executive Summary

In March 2023 core funding of £100,000 was allocated through the Fairer Renfrewshire programme to support the development of a summer holiday programme, with a focus on providing support over the holiday period to low-income families. £20,000 of funding was also allocated from the Future Paisley programme to enhance cultural experiences for low-income households. The Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel played a key role in directing how this funding could be used and in addition it was agreed that the summer 2023 programme should operate based on a set of key principles including:

- There should be a range of activities for children and families – a mixture of child only, family activities, free/chargeable and across a number of different communities in Renfrewshire
- The Council will work with partners to promote the variety of activities that are available – making sure that families know what is on and where
- The core focus of the funding will be to provide activities which support families from the child poverty priority groups and to target gaps in provision across localities
- Any activities funded through Fairer Renfrewshire should be free at the point of access with free food or snacks available depending on the length of the activity.

In late June 2023, Renfrewshire received £120,655 from the Scottish Government as part of their national programme to enhance summer holiday and food provision. This funding was targeted at providing access to activities, childcare and food during the summer holiday period for school age children from low-income families. The additional money from Scottish Government allowed for funding of £240,655 to be available for the delivery of the Summer of Fun programme across Renfrewshire.

A comprehensive programme was developed in partnership with services within the Council, partners and community groups and organisation, with the principles developed by the Lived Experience Panel, being core to everything that was planned and delivered. In some instances, there was continuation or enhancement of activities that have been provided in the past, but there were many different elements of the programme where something was trialled for the first time.

Renfrewshire's **Community Learning and Development** team developed a programme of activities for children and young people with the provision of a healthy meal and worked with partners to significantly extend planned provision across Renfrewshire. The funding was used to provide:

- Summer camps, which had **4,500** attendees, and which over 45% of children who attended were from lone parent families, over 42% were from large families and over a quarter were from families where a family member has a disability
- Specific summer camps for young people with Additional Support Needs, with **190** families using this support
- Street Stuff activities for young people aged 8 – 14, which had **1,858** attendances across 7 locations
- An Adult and Family learning programme, targeted **47** families, of whom 15 were large families and 11 were ethnic minority families.

£55,000 of the total funding available was allocated to support a new pilot for a **small grants programme** for local community groups and organisations to operate for Summer 2023. This programme aimed to deliver free activities over the summer holidays which could reach communities that might be underserved by mainstream activities, particularly low-income families. It is estimated that **739** adults and **1,921** children benefited from these Summer of Fun activities.

These projects were also successful at reaching the child poverty priority groups:

- large families (94%),
- families with a child aged under one year old (88%),
- lone parents (88%)
- families where parents are under the age of 25 (81%).
- just over two thirds of organisations managed to reach black and minority ethnic families, families where someone in the house has a disability, and care experienced children and young people (69% each).

OneRen was also allocated £9,910 to provide a programme of activities across all 12 Renfrewshire libraries, allowing coverage in areas where no other Summer of Fun activity was taking place, including the villages. The programme included Lego sessions, Marble Run Fun, Storytelling, including Sensory Storytelling, Mini Zoos and arts and crafts activities. All activities were well attended, with snacks and drinks provided for the children at as many activities as possible. Figures show that Summer of Fun funding contributed to increasing footfall to Renfrewshire libraries, but it should be noted that this was not the only factor. An overall total of 56,824 physical attendances in the summer months of 2023 at all public libraries represents an increase of 65% from the same period in 2022, up from 34,461. The number of events increased by 74%, up from 448 to 779, while physical attendances at events by adults and children increased by 162% from 4,501 to 11,794.

The £20,000 **Future Paisley** funding was used to fund 3 arts based projects which ran throughout the summer holiday period. Activities included introduction to piano and ukelele, singing and percussion instruments, craft activities and arts workshops providing opportunities to paint, draw and make items to take home. In total 412 children and 74 adults attended these sessions. All three projects provided opportunities for children and young people to access the benefits of art, music and creativity without any financial barriers and were successful in attracting families within the child poverty priority groups.

This report describes the multi-agency, universal and targeted work delivered across Renfrewshire throughout the summer holidays as part of the 2023 Summer Holiday Provision initiative.

Each programme delivered as part of the initiative will be fully evaluated to find out what worked well in terms of activities and to gain understanding of the impact of the programme. Organisations that received small grants funding were asked to complete a feedback form and surveys have been sent out to participants. This information will help to shape future programmes of work. Initial findings from this evaluation work is provided below:

Interim Key findings

- Access to free, inclusive and enjoyable activities alongside provision of a healthy snack or lunch contributed to a successful Summer of Fun programme. The wide range of activities on offer ensured that children were able to try new experiences and visit new places.
- The Summer of Fun programme provided children with the opportunity to learn new skills, make friends, be creative, gain confidence and make memories with their families.
- There is strong evidence that activities reached and benefited low-income families, in particular larger families, lone parents, families with disabilities and families with children aged under one year old.
- Apart from providing free fun activities that low-income families could access, benefits of the Summer of Fun programme included encouraging new people to engage with organisations and helping to reduce costs for families over the long summer holiday.
- Parents enjoyed being able to spend time playing together with their children without the pressure of having to come up with ideas to keep them entertained or having to consider any financial considerations. Their children benefited from having opportunities to mix with other children and to enjoy activities that they may not have been able to do at home, including trying new foods at lunchtime.

- Some participating organisations suggested that consideration should be given to providing additional and targeted funding to increase the capacity of organisations to deliver a wider range of activities for a longer period or on an ongoing basis. This was particular the case for some activities which children and young people had enjoyed and could continue further with.
- The importance of summer activity provision in maintaining continuity of support to families that are regularly working with local organisations was also highlighted as positive benefit and should also be considered for any future programmes.
- Early discussions with colleagues in Children's Services Social Work and Education was crucial to ensure that activities were targeted to those most vulnerable in Renfrewshire. This included dialogue with the Kinship Team and a referral process set up for families who were identified as unable to access the online booking system. This was key positive and is something that could be built on further if future programmes were undertaken.

2. About Summer of Fun

Background

In March 2023 core funding of £100,000 was allocated through the Fairer Renfrewshire programme to support the development of a summer holiday programme, with a focus on providing support over the holiday period to low-income families. £20,000 of funding was also allocated from the Future Paisley programme to enhance cultural experiences for low-income households. The Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel played a key role in directing how this funding could be used.

In late June 2023, Renfrewshire received £120,655 from the Scottish Government as part of their national programme to enhance summer holiday and food provision. This funding was targeted at providing access to activities, childcare and food during the summer holiday period for school age children from low-income families.

While initially it was agreed that £25,000 of the £100,000 Fairer Renfrewshire funding available would be allocated to support a small grants fund pilot for local community groups and organisations to operate for Summer 2023, the Scottish Government funding enabled this grants programme to be increased to £55,000. This aimed to deliver free

activities over the summer holidays which could reach communities that might be underserved by mainstream activities, particularly low-income families.

3. Renfrewshire Summer of Fun Programme

A multi-faceted and diverse programme was developed to deliver a range of activities for children, families and young people to access over the holidays. This included:

- Summer camps organised by the Council's Community Learning and Development Team
- Family activities provided by Community Learning and Development Teams.
- Activities and support for families with children with Additional Support Needs (ASN)
- Evening activities delivered by Street Stuff
- Activities in libraries provided by OneRen
- A programme of activities provided by community partners
- A communications campaign to promote all activities available over the summer in Renfrewshire

The aim was to develop a programme of integrated provision to address the barriers and isolation faced by people in the most deprived areas, concentrating on the Scottish Government's 6 main priority groups, who are especially vulnerable to falling into poverty: lone parent families, ethnic minority families, those with a disability, mothers under 25, those with a child under 1, those with more than 3 children. There was a strong focus on working closely with services such as Children's Services Social Work, Education and other partners to identify families and young people within those groups and to signpost them towards and sign them up for universal activities.

Summer Camps

Building on the success of previous summer programmes and partnership working between services, Renfrewshire's Community Learning and Development team decided to continue with a summer camp model offering places to children and young people. The holiday camps were held in 6 venues across Renfrewshire with a focus on reaching families most at need responding to the Scottish Government's Childcare and activity programmes. This year we included the Gallowhill area following the recent child poverty data which highlighted increasing levels of child poverty in Gallowhill.

Families that had applied for free school meal/clothing grants from the Council were proactively contacted to allow them to book activities before opening these to the wider public. This was trialled this year to make it easier to access bookings and also to reduce stigmas by not asking to provide evidence of low income.

Camps for those aged 5 – 14 years were delivered throughout the summer holidays from Monday – Friday, 9.30am – 3pm twice per week in each of the following venues:

- Renfrew – St James' Primary School
- Gallowhill – Gallowhill Primary School
- Ferguslie Park – Glencoats Primary School
- Linwood – Woodlands Primary School
- Foxbar – Gleniffer High School
- Johnstone – West Johnstone Shared Campus

This year's programme offered several activities along with a healthy meal targeted at children from low-income families. A wide range of activities was delivered including multi-sports and dance activities, samba drumming; outdoor play and games, arts and crafts, clay sculptures, mask making and screen printing as well as an end of summer party on the last week. This year also introduced the children and young people to the revised menus being delivered in the new school term which were well received.

A Senior Social Worker working with care experienced young people and families advised that:

"Early notification of the activities being provided as part of the Summer of Fun programme this year was hugely beneficial for the care experienced families we work with. Having the ability to make referrals on to the Community Learning and Development service ensured the majority of our families were able to be included where possible. School holidays are a difficult time for our families and having these activities with the provision of a healthy meal certainly helped reduce the pressure they are under "

Over the summer holiday period around **4,500** attendances were recorded at the camps. Participants were asked their views on the Summer of Fun camps with a rating of 4.7 out of 5 saying they enjoyed it.

Children and Young People were also asked which activities they enjoyed the most with the following results;

Arts & Crafts 85%

Sport	82%
Dance	54%
Games	83%

Parents had very positive comments about the activities provided.

Wouldn't change anything about it as my daughter loves it she made new friends and with cost of living crisis too we couldn't go on holiday and this club has gave her something to look forward to and kept her off phone and gave her things to do.

Camps have been great and my children have throughly enjoyed them!

Both my kids love attending Street Stuff-wouldn't change anything! My kids have loved the introduction of hot lunches this year. We are very lucky to have this in our community thank you.

My daughter has loved it and it's kept her in a routine and will make it easeir for going back to school.

Parents also had some suggestions for future programmes which will be explored further:

- Adding gymnastics, playing with slime and baseball to the list of activities
- Adding the bus to every location so that everyone who attends has a chance to go on and play games
- Including computer games, for example, Roblox
- More arts and crafts
- Allowing children to have more choice in the activities they want to participate in
- Providing opportunities for children to attend more often
- Potential introduction of additional community venues

The views of children, young people and their families will be used to further develop holiday childcare and activity programmes in the future.



The table below details the the Scottish Government's 6 main priority groups from the families who responded to the questions as part of the sign up process for the Summer Camps.

Category	Yes Responses	% of Families
Families with 3 or children or more	309 out of 725	42.6
Families with a child under 1	51 out of 724	7
Lone parent families	326 out of 719	45.3
Families with parents under 25	10 out of 725	1.4
Families with a disability	186 out of 726	25.6

Black and minority ethnic families	79 out of 710	11
Percentage of children attending from each age	Aged 5	6.2
	Aged 6	18.7
	Aged 7	15.8
	Aged 8	17.6
	Aged 9	13.1
	Aged 10	11.3
	Aged 11	8.8
	Aged 12	4.7
	Aged 13	1.2
	Aged 14	2

The overall total within the 'Yes responses' column is calculated by counting only those responses where an obvious straight 'yes' or 'no' response was provided, hence the differing totals for each category.

The information provided shows the reach of families from the Scottish Government's six main priority groups with the majority of children attending within the age 6 – 11 age range.

ASN Provision

This year's camp continued to identify and respond to the need for provision for children and young people with an additional support need. £40,000 was allocated to Riverbrae ASN playscheme. **190** families took up the offer of support, and fun engaging activities and free play time was delivered throughout the summer holiday period which included:

- A nutritious meal and healthy snacks throughout the day
- Indoor and outdoor activities – including sports and creative arts
- Much needed social interaction with other young people
- Staff who could respond to each individual child's needs
- Free transport for parents within Renfrewshire where required due to the location of the venue and to maximise opportunities and support for families during the summer holiday period.

Early discussions with colleagues in Children's Services Social Work and Education highlighted a gap in service provision for some children with additional support needs who were not eligible to participate in the summer programme being delivered at Riverbrae. To address this gap, CLAD Youth Services provided Print Screen Painting, General Arts and Crafts and Sports Activities for 14 young people from Mary Russell school one day per week throughout July.

Providing programmes that are inclusive and accessible for all children and young people is an important part of the legacy of the Summer of Fun initiative.

Street Stuff

Street Stuff continued to deliver their core programme of activities in the evenings from Monday - Saturday for young people aged 8 – 16 throughout the summer holidays which also included the provision of healthy food funded through Fairer Renfrewshire. 1,858 attendances were recorded with activities including multi-sports and the games buses with ps4 games, Dj decks and having the ability to mix with friends and listen to music and play fun and interactive games. The Street Stuff activities were delivered at the following places:

- Linwood – Our Lady of Peace
- Foxbar – Morar Drive and Foxbar Youth Drop in
- Erskine - Bargarran Primary School
- Johnstone – McMaster Centre
- Shortroods – Beechwood Community Centre MUGA
- Gallowhill Community Centre
- Renfrew – Knockhill Park

These activities allowed us to reach the older age group who did not attend the Summer Camps during the day.



Adult and Family Learning

Adult and Family Learning were working with a range of vulnerable families in the lead up to the summer holidays. Following discussions with Children's Services Social Work and Education it was felt that stopping these during the holiday period could prove detrimental to the families with the positive impact the programme was having. A decision was made to continue working with these families. Adult and Family Learning delivered a weekly

programme throughout the month of July. This was delivered across 4 sites: Moorpark Learning Centre, Southend Action Centre, West Johnstone Shared Campus and the Tannahill Centre. The programme included fun activities, games, and lunch and attracted many families from the child poverty priority groups.

Each venue organised its programme in consultation with the families, ensuring maximum participation and fun. Highlights included physical and outdoor play with sports, games and dancing, arts and crafts, storytelling and making and sharing lunch.

In total **47** families participated in activities including 49 adults and 93 children.

Priority Group	Number of families who attended
Larger Family (3 or more children)	15
Lone Parent Family	3
Minority Ethnic Family	11
Family with a disability	7
Care Experienced Family	7
Young Parent (under 25)	6
Family with a child under 1	3

Families appreciated the thought and planning that went into each session, the range and variety of activities and the dedication of the staff teams in ensuring everyone has a great experience.

Parents identified the main benefits for themselves as being able to spend time playing together with their children without the pressure of having to come up with ideas to keep them entertained or having to consider any financial constraints. They also appreciated the support of the group environment for their own wellbeing.

*My daughter got more comfortable playing with different kids and it got me talking to new people and helped with my anxiety.
(Paisley mum)*

*Given me time with other adults and made the holidays less isolating
(Johnstone mum)*

Parents identified many benefits for their children including having opportunities to mix with other children and to enjoy activities that they may not have been able to do at home. Sharing lunch was also viewed as a benefit because it encouraged some children to try new foods.

*The children had the chance to meet new people and make friends, it helped them with their confidence
(ESOL mum)*

*The kids came out of their shell, being with other families helped so much
(Paisley mum)*

*Children enjoyed lunch and tried things they don't eat at home
(Paisley mum)*

*Opportunity to try things he has never done before – like holding a newt
(Johnstone mum)*

When asked what they might continue doing as a result of taking part in activities, parents identified a range of activities including visits to the park, reading, arts and crafts, and family fun days.

No major improvements were highlighted, other than requests for longer sessions and more programme like this.

4. The Summer of Fun Small Grants Fund

From the £55,000 allocated to this fund, local community and voluntary organisations could apply for small grants of up to £5,000 to cover costs of activities, including venues, activities, food, transport and sessional staff. Smaller awards of up to £500 were also available for organisations with existing activities over the summer to provide healthy snacks or food. Applications were considered for single events or programmes of activities, designed for whole families or for children and young people of a range of ages.

All projects agreed to the following principles

- Activities must be **free**, with no hidden or additional costs
- **Healthy snacks** should be provided, or lunch if full day activities
- Activities should be **inclusive, welcoming, respectful** and **safe**
- Compliant with requirements around **safeguarding, child protection** and **food hygiene** as appropriate
- Able or willing to provide **connections to other services** and supports

In order to ensure that this funding was distributed as quickly as possible, it was recommended that authority was delegated to the Head of Policy and Partnerships to award grants in line with the guidance, and information on awards was provided to the Leadership Board in September 2023.

In total 28 organisations applied for funding. Applications were assessed by a panel consisting of officers from Renfrewshire Council, including from Youth Services and Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership, with the panel meeting regularly between mid June and mid July. The panel members were able to evaluate the Summer of Fun applications based on knowledge of other available support across localities, including those from the Council's Community Learning and Development team.

Overall **17** projects were funded through Summer of Fun, to a total of £53,841.60. In addition Future Paisley funded **3** projects which were arts based. The fund was very oversubscribed, and it was not possible to approve all applications received. Unsuccessful applicants were signposted to other support or information about sources of funding via Engage Renfrewshire.

A list of the funded host organisations delivering Summer of Fun activities can be found in Appendix 1.

A wide range of activities for children and young people of all ages were provided through the funding, along with healthy snacks/ lunches and drinks.

Activities that were offered included:

- Toddler play sessions
- Summer playschemes offering free childcare
- Free outdoor activities in local parks
- Day trips to local visitor attractions to allow families to make memories together
- Arts and crafts and creative activities, such as pottery painting, jewellery making, sewing and baking

- Sports activities such as football, Zumba dancing, scuba diving, snorkelling and water confidence
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Maths)
- Drama workshops

Arts activities proved to be popular, with sessions at Outspoken Arts and RIG Arts being well attended. Both organisations ran classes led by professional, local artists. Outspoken Arts ran daily arts and craft classes lasting two hours, providing opportunities to paint, draw, and make prints and collages.

We provided a variety of art workshops for primary school aged children. Each workshop had a theme led by an artist skilled in that particular area. Workshops included: Photography and Collage, Tote Bag Printing with Stencils, Clay Modelling, Rock Painting, Creating Volcanos from Mache and Flowing Lava, Making Suncatchers, Painting with Watercolours, Kite Making, and Painting with Light.

RIG Arts

Ralston Out of School Care ran a series of drama workshops involving 22 children, which culminated in a show for the parents and carers of the children who attended.



Paisley YMCA delivered an exciting programme of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Maths) activities over 5 weeks. Every Wednesday they also worked with

local Ukrainian families providing arts and crafts and music based activities as well as an opportunity to meet each other, chat and relax with some snacks and teas/coffees.

Renfrew YMCA provided young children with a variety of indoor and outdoor opportunities over a 5 week period. Upcycling and jewellery making workshops were combined with visits from animal trainers, pottery painting and tree top climbing in Loch Lomond.

Paisley North Church of Scotland ran a very successful six day holiday club in Ferguslie Park which they are hoping to repeat next year.

Libraries ran a programme which included Lego sessions, Marble Run Fun, Storytelling, including Sensory Storytelling, Mini Zoos and arts and crafts activities.

Case studies are provided at Appendix 2.

Future Paisley Funded activities

Future Paisley funded 3 activities:

Brick Lane Music Academy's Mini Music Makers Summer Fun Project delivered two weeks of music making activities for ages 3-6 years from 11am to 2 pm each Monday and Wednesday. Activities included musical games, introduction to piano and ukulele, singing and percussion instruments, craft activities and lunch. In total 24 adults and 24 children attended.

Outspoken Arts's Summer Art Camp provided two hourly creative arts workshops in Paisley town centre aimed at young people, families, and new Scots. Participants were able to draw, paint, print and create artworks to take away. The workshops were led by professional artists and 50 adults and 356 children attended.

RIG Arts ran summer sessions for primary school aged children at Seedhill Community Art Space, facilitating three workshops per week over the summer holidays. Workshops were delivered by professional artists and supported positive mental health and wellbeing through creativity, culture, and community. 8 – 10 children attended each session.

All three projects provided opportunities for children and young people to access the benefits of art, music and creativity without any financial barriers and were successful in attracting families within the child poverty priority groups.

OneRen activities

OneRen was allocated £9,910 to provide a programme of activities across all 12 Renfrewshire libraries, allowing coverage in areas where no Summer of Fun activity was proposed. Activities included:

- Giant games
- Lego
- Marble runs
- Campfire and sensory storytelling (16 sessions)
- Mini zoos (2 sessions)
- Petting zoo (2 sessions)

The figures in the table below show that Summer of Fun funding contributed to increasing footfall to Renfrewshire libraries, but it should be noted that this was not the only factor. Overall physical attendances in the summer months of 2023 at all public libraries increased by 65% from the same period in 2022. The number of events increased by 74%, while physical attendances at events by adults and children increased by 162%. Funding for tea, coffee and juice and snacks for children was a very significant contributory factor in attracting people in, and in encouraging them to stay.

	July & August 2022	July & August 2023
Overall Physical Attendances at all Renfrewshire Public Libraries	34,461	56,824
Number of Physical Events at all Renfrewshire Public Libraries	448	779
Physical Attendances at all Events (Both Adult and Children)	4,501	11,794

Some events were ticketed to control numbers, for example the Animal Man visits, which were the most popular. Storytelling and mini-zoos were all over subscribed and, although Ferguslie Library delivered activities on a drop in basis, it attracted over 300 visitors in one afternoon. Many families signed up to library membership and the Summer Reading Challenge, and engaged in other activities while they waited to see the animals.

The toys purchased with funding were also very popular, especially giant fishing, football and Lego and Duplo and continue to be used. Libraries now host several ongoing Lego clubs and Duplo sessions for the under fives. Snacks and drinks, such as popcorn and flavoured water were provided for the children at as many activities as possible.

5. Evaluating the Summer of Fun Small Grants Programme

In late August a feedback form was sent out to every organisation that had delivered activities as part of the Summer of Fun programme to ask about their experience of delivering activities and to gain understanding of the difference that it had made for those who participated.

Out of 20 funded projects, 16 feedback forms were returned. Feedback from organisations included photographs of activities, some of which are included in this report.

Promoting Activities

Renfrewshire Council's Communications and Marketing team promoted the Summer of Fun programme widely through social media. In line with input from the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel, all free activities, whether Summer of Fun grant funded, through Community Learning and Development, or through Libraries, were listed on one web page. This included the Skoobmobile programme.

Organisations who received small grants funding were asked how people found out about the activities they were offering. Three quarters of those who responded stated that people had found out about their project mainly through social media, while just over half reported that word of mouth (53%) was a key factor in promoting their activity. Almost half of respondents related that people found out because they were already attending other activities that the organisation delivered, while a third cited referrals from other organisations.

How did people find out about your Summer of Fun project?	
Method of information	%
Social media	75
Word of mouth	53

Attending other activities	47
Referral from another organisation	33
Posters	20
Partners	20
WhatsApp group used by the organisation	13
Organisation's Facebook page	13
Database of contacts	13
Council website	7
Church notice	7

Note: All respondents provided more than one answer to this question

RIG Arts promoted activities through their WhatsApp group which notifies parents about children's activities and put a poster up on their community notice board. Organisations also promoted activities through other channels.

Paisley North Church of Scotland already had a lot of contact with local families which resulted in their activity being fully booked before it has even started.

The majority of organisations funded already receive referrals from statutory agencies in health and social work and it was encouraging to find that organisations were referring between themselves too. For example, Mossvale Community Church asked Serve 2020 and Migrant Help to share information about their activities with their service users.

Around half of organisations that used referral pathways had received referrals from health visitors, social workers, nurseries, local primary schools, Engage Renfrewshire and other local groups such as mother and toddler, karate, out of school care, Finding Your Feet and Active Communities.

Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde invited families to attend their summer trip through their Family Support Co-ordinator who supports families that work with the organisations, while Renfrew YMCA received referrals from the local schools and health visitors.

KLAS Care contacted all the children on their own register and also offered spaces to families that could not attend activities offered by Community Learning Support.

How successful were the activity sessions?

The variety of activities delivered as part of the Summer of Fun programme, ranging from music and art to science and football, resulted in a successful programme that provided opportunities for children to have fun, try new activities and make friends.

Parents had the option to stay with children and meet other parents or, at Brick Lane Music Academy, they could take advantage of the creche facility to get some time to catch up on other tasks.

Families who were unable to afford to pay for any extracurricular activities for their children through the summer benefited from the activities being free and inclusive of a healthy snack or lunch.

The workshops were particularly enjoyable as the children were of mixed ages and abilities and all mixed well. The atmosphere of the Art Department was relaxed and fun and everyone appreciated the gentle coaching and encouragement. The activities were easy to engage with and parents joined in where it interested them or could enjoy our lounge area and have free snacks and drinks.

Outspoken Arts

All organisations provided inclusive activities which were enjoyed by children of all ages. Staff at KLAS Care were able to provide an environment where children with a neurodiverse sibling could be in the same place, allowing parents to have peace of mind and some respite. Their activities enabled children to learn new skills that they could transfer to school or home.

Providing a range of different activities that were designed to suit all levels of ability led to a successful programme of creative activities at RIG Arts. The organisation used local artists with different skills to keep their workshops interesting and found that children worked well together. Although some children knew each other from school, others made new friendships.

Through their STEAM activities, Paisley YMCA offered opportunities for young people to build, create and be hands on and this worked well, while Mossvale Community Church found that the physical activities they provided, such as Zumba and limbo were very popular.

Children and their parents/carers also had opportunities to go on day trips to visit local attractions, visiting places they had never been to and experiencing the excitement of a day out, especially important for those without access to transport.

The chosen destination, about an hour away by coach, offered an exciting summer adventure for many who were unable to afford to go away over the summer. Funding helped us cover the costs of transportation, entrance fees, packed lunch and attraction rides. The trip was carefully planned, and risk assessed to ensure it was accessible, safe and inclusive for families wanting to attend.

Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde

The healthy food provision also helped to encourage children to attend and contributed to the success of the programme, supporting parents of nursery age children who were not entitled to financial support over the summer.

Having healthy food available worked really well. Due to some allergies, and it being summer, we mainly provided fruit as snacks. It was great to see some of the children explore different fruits that they said they didn't recognise or tried before, such as apricots. The children did ask for sweets and crisps but when we said we could only provide healthy snacks the children accepted that first time.

RIG Arts

Renfrewshire Rainbow Buddies found that parental engagement was high and bringing activities to communities rather than asking people to travel to activities was a great benefit to many parents and carers. Some organisations found that children and young people enjoyed activities that families could do together and that having a relaxing space helped to build up confidence and keep children engaged in activities. RIG Arts also found that, because a couple of the artists delivering activities were from the local area, children were able to connect with them easily.

The programme was hugely successful for us. We were inundated and had a waiting list. All the families involved said that it helped their children's confidence and boosted their interest in music. Many stated that they would love their child to attend regular classes if they were affordable. Some children who attended were from families who did not previously have access to music and could not afford music activities.

Brick Lane Music Academy

Sewing2gether All Nations at Mossvale Community Church Welcome Café provided activities, conversational English lessons and health food.

All activities were open to the refugee community, encouraging family attendance and participation. At our final Welcome Café, when the children had returned to school, parents

led our staff and volunteers in a special cookery session making varenyky (Ukrainian dumplings) which was a lovely finale to our summer.

Sewing2gether All Nations at Mossvale Community Church

Food table at Sewing Together All Nations



How many people attended?

Organisations were asked about the number of people who attended their activities. We did not ask organisations to keep track of numbers while delivering activities, but some did, and others provided an estimate. The average number of people attending each session was 12 adults and 30 children (from 14 project responses). Not all projects had adults participating. For example, at RIG Arts adults were welcome to stay but all the adults chose to drop their children off and pick them up after the workshop.

Sessions which attracted the most children were activities for toddlers, football camp, inflatables and programmes with varied activities each week that combined a day trip. Paisley North Community Council attracted 100 adults and 150 children to their Sports Packs in the Park Fun Day. Renfrewshire Rainbow Buddies took 128 people on a trip to the zoo and Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde provided a family trip to Almond Valley Visitor Centre which attracted 74 adults and 83 children. Not all projects ran for a full six

weeks but an estimated figure from 16 project responses suggests that around 739 adults and 1,921 children benefited from Summer of Fun activities.

The aim of the Summer of Fun programme was to provide a range of activities that would be accessible to low-income families across Renfrewshire, in particular supporting families in the six child poverty priority groups, who are at higher risk of living on a low-income as well as Care Experienced young people. All 16 projects that provided feedback responded that they had managed to reach these families through their activities. A majority (94%) of projects were able to reach families in four or more of the priority groups. Just under a third of projects (31%) managed to reach six of the seven priority groups while a quarter of projects were able to reach families in all of the child poverty priority groups and those with care experience.

Projects were most successful at reaching the following families:

- families with three or more children (94%)
- families with a child aged under one year old (88%)
- lone parents (88%)
- families where parents are under the age of 25 (81%)

Just over two thirds of organisations managed to reach black and minority ethnic families, families where someone in the house has a disability and care experienced children and young people (69% each).

When asked how they were able to reach these families whilst some organisations received referrals, most of the organisations responded that they are based in areas with a high level of low-income families and are already working with many of these families. The summer programme offered an opportunity to provide additional support to families over the summer break.

75% of the parents we support in Renfrewshire identify as having mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, or perinatal mental health. We know that those we work with have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic... The increase in cost of living also affects the families we support unduly. Moving forward we anticipate an ongoing legacy of heightened anxiety over finances, increased loneliness, and poor self-esteem.

Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde

KLAS Care asked parents and carers a series of questions to ensure that the free activities would benefit those families who needed them most. Questions related to supporting with household finances, improving the child's health and wellbeing by having access to

outdoor play, improving family health and wellbeing and supporting parents/carers to increase hours of employment or take up employment.

Paisley North Community Council limited their event to residents from the Paisley North area to ensure that they could supply every child in the area with a sports pack, while Thorn Athletic Community Trust advertised directly to low-income families first using their existing network before opening up their football camp to the wider community.

31 of the 40 children who attended Paisley North Church of Scotland's Ferguslie Park Holiday Club came from Ferguslie Park via direct contact with the holiday club.

Registration forms were dropped off at homes by the team who made personal contact with each family.

Outspoken Arts took block bookings from local family care groups who were familiar with the organisation.

Who attended your Summer of Fun project?		
	Number of projects	%
Families with 3 or more children	15	94
Families with a child aged under one year old	14	88
Lone Parents	14	88
Families where parents are under the age of 25	13	81
Families where someone in the house has a disability	11	69
Black and minority ethnic families	11	69
Care experienced children and young people	11	69

What difference did the Summer of Fun programme make?

Feedback from organisations about the impact of the programme was overwhelmingly positive. All the organisations agreed that there were several benefits for families who attended activities. They highlighted the opportunity for low-income families to access fun activities and to engage with projects and organisations they had not been aware of previously.

Most respondents (94%) reported that activities had also helped to reduce financial costs for families. Other perceived benefits were helping people to learn about a new service in their local area (81% of respondents) and providing access to information and advice (69% each).

Benefit to people attending activities	Number of responses	%
Providing fun activities that low-income families could access	16	100
Encouraging new people to engage with the project / organisation	16	100
Reducing financial costs for families	15	94
Helping people to learn about a new service in their local area	13	81
Providing access to information / advice	11	69

For many of our families this a chance to enjoy a fun, safe and supported trip that they would not undertake themselves due to lack of confidence and financial restraints. Volunteers and Family Coordinators are known to the families and have an established relationship, giving the families confidence to be part of the adventure which might otherwise be a source of anxiety.

Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde

For families with limited options for places to go, the programme enabled them to enjoy activities with their children, and some parents noticed an increase in confidence in their child, particularly those who attended music and drama activities. In addition to free activities, children also had access to healthy lunches and snacks, while parents could benefit from signposting to other sources of support, such as local food pantries and advice on financial support. Some participants enjoyed the programme so much that they have joined groups on a longer-term basis.

The parents gave us lots of positive feedback that the children enjoyed the activities and that the parents appreciated healthy snacks being provided. The parents also said that it was

great to see these activities in the local area as the town centre, although very close geographically, can be difficult to access for some parents.

RIG Arts



Scuba Diving with Just Dive in

Some organisations, such as KLAS Care, already had an established activity programme which many of their client base were happy to pay for. Summer of Fun funding enabled them to offer activities to families who would find cost a barrier to participation, benefiting both parent and child, as demonstrated in the following feedback from a parent who attended Renfrew YMCA activities.

B has really enjoyed his time at YMCA over the summer. We are new to the area and with this B has faced big changes - new house and school. B has ADHD...and it has allowed B to participate and experience lots of things I would otherwise have struggled to afford to do. And that I would have struggled to manage to do it on my own. We are very grateful for your service and staff.

Renfrew YMCA

What worked well?

Organisations commented on the ease of application and feedback process as well as the flexibility regarding activities proposed. The programme elicited a positive response from attendees and in some areas activities were over subscribed by twice the amount of people, demonstrating an appetite for free activities over the summer period. Prompt responses

from council staff were appreciated particularly given that funding was awarded very close to the start of the summer holidays and organisations needed to get activities up and running quickly.

I found the correspondence, the application process and the support and follow up process easy and helpful which meant we could focus on bringing the event into reality. We honestly wouldn't have been able to host our event, offer the activities during it without the support of the "Summer of Fun" programme.

Paisley North Church of Scotland

This worked well as the funding goes to local people who know what the needs within local areas are and people know our group and know events are free to everyone so there's no stigma or embarrassment when taking part.

Stronger Communities Glenburn

When asked for suggestions to improve the Summer of Fun programme, organisations reported that **additional funding** would enable them to increase capacity, increase the number of days of provision and the range of activities. The limited amount of funding meant that, in some cases, organisations received partial funding for trips and had to allocate funds from elsewhere within their organisation to cover the shortfall.

Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde emphasised the importance of maintaining connections over the summer holidays with the families they support to ensure continuity of support.

Further funding would allow us to fund further activities over the summer such as our Summer Park Days which get our families out and about to parks and amenities in the local area. We know that during summer holiday periods isolation is increased for the families we support as they are limited for social experiences due to nurseries and schools being closed.

Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde

Although organisations were positive about communication with council officers and the speed of payments, the **timescales** between being awarded funding and delivering the programme of activities was challenging. Several organisations suggested that providing information about the Summer of Fun programme and awarding funding earlier would have given them more time to plan and advertise activities and to liaise with partner organisations, including schools, nurseries and health visitors to reach families that would benefit most.

I would have liked the funding earlier so we could have liaised with school for any families that needed the support from the practitioners. Just for the funding to be available earlier, even an indication on what has been agreed as an organisation with a very unrestricted budget we could not approach parents and partner organisations until the money was secured.

KLAS Care

Another challenge highlighted by Thorn Athletic Community Trust was taking into consideration different **food allergies and dietary requirements** when providing over 500 snack lunches.

Some organisations found that **childminders were accessing a lot of the free activities** and summer camps, taking up spaces that could go to families that would benefit more. An issue for future consideration would be whether it would be possible or practical to limit the number of spaces that childminders can access.

Mossvale Community Church suggested considering **smaller programmes for other holiday periods** and contributing to the local circular economy by getting best prices from local food providers / discounts from supermarkets and creating a food network.

RIG Arts would like to organise ‘**relaxed workshops**’ where the maximum number would be 5 children. These would be aimed at children who may be overwhelmed by the noise and buzz of a regular workshop and who prefer a more relaxed environment.

In addition to the feedback from organisations, **no organisation applied for a smaller grant for food only**, so consideration should be given to whether this offer is made in future programmes.

6. Conclusions

Overall The Summer of Fun programme aimed to deliver activities over the summer holidays which could reach communities that might be underserved by mainstream activities, particularly low-income families.

Feedback suggests that the programme was able to reach these families, particularly those families who are in the child poverty priority groups. Feedback also suggest that the programme benefited children and families by providing opportunities to make memories together, by increasing confidence and access to a wide range of activities.

There is evidence that the programme provided free fun activities that low-income families could access, encouraged young people to try new activities, encouraged engagement with services, both public and third sector and helped to reduce costs for families over the long summer holiday.

Parents who participated in Community Learning and Development led activities identified many benefits for themselves and their children. Parents enjoyed being able to spend time playing together with their children without the pressure of having to come up with ideas to keep them entertained or having to consider any financial constraints. Their children benefited from having opportunities to mix with other children and to enjoy activities that they may not have been able to do at home. Sharing lunch was also viewed as a benefit because it encouraged some children to try new foods. Many parents were encouraged to continue some activities because of participating, including visits to the park, reading, arts and crafts, and family fun days.

Whilst the programme was successful, it is important to take into account the feedback above if a similar programme is to be delivered in future. Organisations should have adequate notice of funding opportunities to enable them to develop a detailed programme of activity and to work with partners to promote this to families who will benefit most from the programme.

It will also be important to consider the role of summer activities in maintaining continuity of support to families that are regularly working with local organisations during term time and in encouraging families to join groups that they may not have been previously aware of.

Additional funding would increase the capacity of organisations to deliver a wider range of activities for longer, including activities aimed at children with sensory challenges. Further targeting of resources could also provide opportunities for children from low-income families to access art or music classes on a regular basis.

There is considerable organisation that goes into an event of this nature, not only the operation planning but also the support given to families to help them reach the level of confidence and trust to attend. It is a great opportunity for families, volunteers and staff to be out and about socialising with the wider circle of Home-Start. Seeing the families all together with the children having so much fun plus the feedback from families makes it very rewarding for all involved. Without the Summer of Fun funding the event would not have been possible.

Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde



7. Appendix 1 – Organisations which provided Summer of Fun activities

Brick Lane Music Academy

Friends of Knockhill Park

Home-Start Renfrewshire & Inverclyde

Johnstone Castle Learning Centre

Johnstone Out of School Service

Just Dive in CIC

KLAS Care CIC

Mossvale Community Church

Outspoken Arts Ltd

Paisley North Church of Scotland

Paisley North Community Council

Paisley YMCA

Ralston Out of School Care

Renfrewshire Effort to Empower Minorities (REEM)

Renfrew YMCA

Renfrewshire Rainbow Buddies

RIG Arts

Stronger Communities Glenburn and Glenburn Resource Centre

Thorn Athletic Community Trust

Twist and Hit Cheerleaders

8. Appendix 2 – Case Studies

RALSTON PRIMARY OUT OF SCHOOL CARE SUMMER DRAMA GROUP

Ralston OSC provided drama workshops that were open to all children. Some of the children who participated are registered with the summer play scheme but not the OSC and others have never been part of the service. They engaged Stacey from Upbeat Theatre Company to run the programme and allocated one of their staff to support it.

Upbeats Theatre Company are extremely professional and provided costumes, extra staff, facepainting, scenery, lighting, pictures and video. Stacey was very popular with the children who enjoyed working with her. There were 6 rehearsals before the show on the last day of the summer holidays. 22 children participated in the show and over 50 parents, friends and family attended. As part of the funding Ralston also provided children with healthy snacks.

Feedback from parents and children was very positive, with parents praising the professionalism and quality of the produced show and children saying they enjoyed saying their lines, singing, dressing up and getting their faces painted.

Feedback from children:

I liked acting and getting face paint and costumes

I liked the makeup and practicing the songs

Feedback from parents:

The show was absolutely fantastic! With such a short space of time to rehearse and prepare the children did an amazing job- Thank you to all the leaders and teachers who helped them learn the songs, lines and dances. On a personal note, it was excellent to see my daughter coming out of her shell and overcoming her anxieties to perform today. She was very nervous but your encouragement and support gave her the courage and confidence. Keep up the good work!

Such a brilliant thing to do. Great for the kids confidence and so much fun to watch. Please do it again.

9.

PAISLEY NORTH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND FERGUSLIE PARK HOLIDAY CLUB

Paisley North Church of Scotland ran a six-day holiday club with parachute games, messy challenges, and Baker Ross craft activities.

Their theme for the week was “Seaside Rock”. During the week they provided 20 hours of activities aimed at primary aged children in P1 to P6, bringing children together to explore faith and life learning.

Parents and carers were invited to join in activities and share a meal on one of the days and staff from the local Employability service, Invest in Renfrewshire also visited.

Younger children spent time at the Community Circus, learning how to spin plates, walk and balance on a low tight rope, spin hoops and ride a unicycle.

Older children from P4-6 went on a trip to the SU Gowanbank Outdoor centre in Darvel. They enjoyed tree climbing led by trained staff as well as an outdoor barbeque and exploring some teamwork through guided crate climbing.

An event on the Sunday attracted 21 people (children/parents/carers) who attended the end of week catch up exploring some of the week’s programme and seeing the finale of the drama, enjoying games, crafts, and some refreshments together with the team.



Chief Executive's Service
Renfrewshire Council
Renfrewshire House
Cotton Street
Paisley
PA1 1BR

