
To: Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee

On: 6th September 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. As agreed by Council on 3 March 2022, all activities have now come together to form a new Fairer Renfrewshire Programme in Renfrewshire. Council agreed on 19 May 2022 to form the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee to facilitate more scrutiny and oversight of issues relating to poverty and inequality in Renfrewshire.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. This paper provides an update on key projects being progressed through the programme, and highlights key priorities which will be the focus of activity between September and December 2023. These include:
 - Progressing a ‘deep dive’ data exercise around child poverty as a Community Planning Partnership, focussing on the six priority family groups.
 - Developing the Fair Food Renfrewshire partnership, using the Sustainable Food Places toolkit and hosting a meeting of the recently established steering group.
 - Continuing the evaluation of projects within Tackling Poverty Programme and exploring future options with services around required priorities going forward.

- Launch of this year's Winter Connections programme.
- Development of the poverty and participation test of change, working alongside the newly established lived experience panel to develop recommendations and the shape of future work.

2. Recommendations

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

Advice services in Renfrewshire

- 4.1. Further to previous updates, the new Schools Advice Service, called the 'School Support Service' is now in place across all Renfrewshire secondary schools. This service, provided by Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau (RCAB), embeds advice workers across all secondary schools in Renfrewshire including Additional Support Needs settings. Referrals can be received by pupils over 16, the parent/carer of any pupils, school staff on behalf of families or schools staff themselves.
- 4.2. To promote the service, leaflets were provided to all our 'Summer of Fun' locations, including all libraries. RCAB have also produced social media posts and the service is detailed on their website. The Council's Ren10 service is being updated to show information about the School Support Service too. Further Council promotion of the service will commence now the new academic year has begun.

- 4.3. The first appointments were booked prior to schools returning from their summer break, and the initial rota for bookings will be monitored closely to ensure best use of resource, and changes made if necessary.
- 4.4. Complementary to this, work is underway to launch the family advice service within Advice Works. As a starting point for this work, as part of the process for applying for Free School meals or School Clothing Grants, applicants were given some information about the Advice Works service and asked three questions:
- Would you like an advice worker to check you are getting all the benefits that you are entitled to?
 - Do you find it difficult to pay your debts?
 - Do you think you would find some advice on money management helpful?

Where an applicant ticked 'yes' to any of these questions, an advice worker would get in touch.

- 4.5. As a result of this exercise, 1,099 clients have been referred to Advice Works by mid-August, of which 435 have had no previous contact with Advice Works and are brand new to the service. Advice Works are progressing the referrals and have contacted 393 of these, with 140 now engaged with the service.
- 4.6. The family advice service will work alongside early years and primary school settings, complementary to the advice service for secondary schools, and will focus on families of younger children to maximise household income through income advice, but also seeks to increase take-up of wider supports provided by the Council for families, for example, free school meals, school clothing grants or employability supports for parents. A key initial focus for the team will be Free School Meal uptake, as well as reaching out to support families with School Meal Debt.

Fair Food Renfrewshire

- 4.7. Using comments and responses to the discussed questions at the Fair Food Renfrewshire meeting held in May 2023, a Vision and Charter were developed for the initiative and an initial draft of these documents circulated to attendees and those who had shown an interest in being part of Fair Food Renfrewshire for comment. Comments have been collated and the drafts, along with a draft Terms of Reference will be passed to the Steering Group for discussion and agreement at its first meeting on 1st September 2023.
- 4.8. The Steering Group, chaired by Renfrewshire's Food Champion, Laura McIntyre (Head of Policy and Partnerships) is made up of members from Renfrewshire Council, Renfrewshire HSCP, Engage Renfrewshire, NHSGGC and Renfrewshire Foodbank, with engagement ongoing to obtain input from food businesses.
- 4.9. Nourish Scotland continues to support this work in Renfrewshire, which is based on the Sustainable Food Places Toolkit.

Community food fund

- 4.10. As agreed at Leadership Board on 14 June 2023, additional funding of £10,000 was allocated to top up the remaining £15,000 available within the Community Food Fund. It was subsequently agreed that the Fund would reopen following the summer recess. Grant guidance was updated during the summer period and applications opened in August, with funding of £4,000 available per application. An update on the process and resulting officer recommendations will be submitted to Leadership Board in September 2023.

Local Child Poverty Action Report

- 4.11. Renfrewshire's Local Child Poverty Action Report (LCPAR) was approved by Leadership Board in June 2023 as well as the Public Health and Wellbeing committee within NHS GGC and has now been published. The LCPAR is an annual report describing ongoing and planned action to tackle child poverty at a local level. This is a joint duty on both local authorities and regional health boards, and a statutory requirement of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

Summer activity and food programme

- 4.12. A full update will be provided under a separate agenda item for consideration by sub-committee members.

5. Participation and engagement

Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel

- 5.1. Further to updates at Leadership Board and the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee, our lived experience panel, the Fairer Renfrewshire panel, continues to meet with officers across Council services to ensure the voice of those with lived experience of poverty informs Council's policy and practice.
- 5.2. Since the Sub-Committee last met, drafting of a Working Agreement, setting down how the Panel, the Council, and STAR Project which supports the Panel should work together, has commenced and is in the final stages of agreement. A work plan is also being developed to ensure priority topics for the Panel and for the Council are discussed.
- 5.3. The Panel also met with Officers from Housing to discuss issues such as allocations and repairs, housing being one of the Panel's initial priorities. A further meeting is due to take place with Officers from the Council's employability service, Invest in Renfrewshire at the request of Invest, who want to understand better how they can reach and support those who are not working or in low paid jobs, especially within their priority groups which include parents, those with disabilities and health conditions and young people.

6. Next steps

6.1 In terms of the next quarter, it may be helpful for sub-committee members to note the following priorities which are being progressed by officers, which include:

- Commencing a ‘deep dive’ data exercise around child poverty as a Community Planning Partnership, focussing on the six priority family groups
- Developing the Fair Food Renfrewshire partnership, using the Sustainable Food Places toolkit
- Continuing the evaluation of projects within Tackling Poverty Programme and exploring future options with services around required priorities going forward
- Launch of this year’s Winter Connections programme
- Development of the poverty and participation test of change, working alongside the newly established lived experience panel to develop recommendations and the shape of future work.

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: Laura McIntyre, Head of Policy and Partnerships.