



To: **Renfrewshire Forum For Empowering Communities**

On: **5 May 2015**

Report by:

Engage Renfrewshire

**TACKLING POVERTY IN RENFREWSHIRE: REPORT OF RENFREWSHIRE'S
TACKLING POVERTY COMMISSION**

1. Summary

- 1.1 *Tackling Poverty In Renfrewshire*, the report of Renfrewshire's Poverty Commission was published in March 2015. This is the first independent report commissioned by a Scottish Council to consider specifically the issue of child poverty.
- 1.2 The report makes 24 recommendations. These focus on priority work that should be undertaken by Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership, including Renfrewshire Forum For Empowering Communities and how organisations should work to tackle poverty. *Tackling Poverty In Renfrewshire* will be tabled at the meeting.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Poverty Commission's report is to guide each of the thematic Boards of Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership to develop practical action that will address the recommendations. Renfrewshire Forum For Empowering Communities has a key role to play in ensuring that communities themselves are empowered to tackle poverty.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Renfrewshire Forum For Empowering Communities:
 - (a) Develop action on the findings and recommendations of *Tackling Poverty In Renfrewshire*;
 - (b) Agree to lead a workshop event to be held for voluntary and community sector organisations in Renfrewshire to be held on 29 May 2015 to discuss the contribution of the third sector to tackling poverty in Renfrewshire, as set out in paragraph 4.1; and
 - (c) Agree that Engage Renfrewshire work with members of the Forum and other third sector organisations as necessary to develop a response to the questions outlined in section 4, for submission to Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership.



3. Key Points From *Tackling Poverty In Renfrewshire*

- 3.1 The Poverty Commission organised its work around **three outcomes** of:
- Pockets** – maximising the financial resources of families on low income.
 - Prospects** – improved life chances of children in poverty.
 - Places** – children from low income households live in well-designed, sustainable places.
- 3.2 Around the three outcomes, the Poverty Commission identified five key questions to frame its work:

- How can we **prevent** child poverty?
- How can we **alleviate** the impact of children living in poverty?
- How can we provide families with sustainable routes to **escape** poverty?
- How can we change **attitudes** to families and children living in poverty?
- What are the key national policies the Council and its partners shall seek to **influence**?

3.3 The **key findings** of the Poverty Commission are:

- Poverty is changing and our response needs to change. There are now more households in poverty who are working, than not. Low pay, inadequate working hours and insecure employment are now key causes of poverty.
- The welfare system no longer provides an adequate safety net and is causing hardship for those it is designed to support, particularly due to delays and errors in benefit payments and tougher benefit sanctions.
- Growing up in poverty can have a huge influence on a child's future. Addressing the attainment gap in schools is critical to make sure children from low-income families are able to achieve their potential.
- Power should be shared, with communities allowed to set their own priorities, and resources devolved to help to achieve them.
- Tackling poverty is everyone's responsibility. The Council, its Community Planning Partners and wider organisations such as employers and housing providers, will need to work in partnership on shared priorities and deliver real leadership around anti-poverty practice in Renfrewshire and beyond.

- 3.4 The Poverty Commission has identified **five key priorities** for the partners in Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership to take action on:

- Increasing the number of households who can access employment that provides and acceptable standard of living.



- Preventing financial crisis and supporting low-income families to make the most of their money.
- Improving levels of physical and mental health of children in low-income families.
- Closing the attainment gap between children from low-income families and their better-off peers.
- Creating neighbourhoods where people want to live and can afford to live.

3.5 The Poverty Commission has made **twenty-four recommendations** under the outcomes of Pockets, Prospects and Places and directed these to various agencies to address. These recommendations are outlined below, with the fourteen that the Forum can have greatest influence on highlighted in bold below :

Pockets

Increase the number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living

- **Halve the number of workers in Renfrewshire being paid below the living wage. (Community Planning Partnership)**
- Make Renfrewshire a pioneer pilot area to test a redesign of incentives and sanctions, and their role in helping people into work. (Department for Work and Pensions)
- **Ensure high-quality, affordable, flexible childcare is widely used by low income families, and is designed to reflect the specific needs of those at highest risk of poverty, such as lone parents and disabled families. (Renfrewshire Council)**
- **Review feasibility of providing time-limited free public transport to support people to move into work or training. (Community Planning Partnership)**
- **Work in partnership with employers to prioritise high-quality on-the-job training, with a particular emphasis on supporting lone parents to progress at work. (Skills Development Scotland)**

Prevent financial crisis and support low income families to make the most of their money

- **Increase financial capability of low income families by investing in peer-led financial education programmes. (Community Planning Partnership)**
- Use bargaining power to address the “poverty premium” imposed on low-



income consumers by lenders and service providers. (Community Planning Partnership)

- **Improve the impact of local advice and advocacy services to focus on empowering people to prevent financial crisis and increasing take-up of welfare benefits. (Renfrewshire Council)**
- Provide access to energy advice for all low-income households in Renfrewshire. (Renfrewshire Council)
- **Build local connections between primary healthcare and financial inclusion, and co-locate primary care with relevant support services where possible. (NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde)**

Prospects

Improve levels of physical and mental health of children in low income families

- Extend the Healthier, Wealthier Children project across all primary care and community services in Renfrewshire. (NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde)
- Target sufficient resource to improve the health of mothers and babies living in, or at risk of, poverty through both universal health visiting provision, and dedicated projects such as Family Nurse Partnership. (NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde)
- **Develop a cohesive partnership approach to supporting youth mental health, which equips organisations to deliver support, respond to mental health distress and build young peoples' resilience. (Community Planning Partnership)**

Close the educational attainment gap between children from low income families and their better-off peers

- Share language development information from 30-month child health review across relevant partners, to allow early years practitioners to meet the developmental needs of each child. (NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde)
- **Use all available poverty data and develop professional expertise in addressing the attainment gap in schools. (Renfrewshire Council)**
- Deliver tailored interventions in schools to address the gap, with specific focus on literacy skills and parental involvement. (Renfrewshire Council)
- Allocate school resources to reflect levels of deprivation, and specifically link these resources to closing the attainment gap and ensuring more pupils from low income families reach positive destinations. (Scottish Government)



- Address the financial barriers to school education, in particular reviewing the “cost of the school day” and the support available for the cost of uniforms and school meals. (Renfrewshire Council)
- **Build strong partnerships between education providers and local industry, to improve vocational pathways; to ensure provision of meaningful work experience; and ensure employers play a pivotal role in the skills development of young people and improve the level of recruitment directly from education. (Community Planning Partnership)**

Places

Create neighbourhoods where people want to live, and can afford to live

- **Develop funding partnerships with independent funders that create new opportunities for neighbourhood regeneration. (Community Planning Partnership)**
- **Pilot a regeneration programme which is co-produced with local people and enables them to shape resources around community priorities and assets. (Community Planning Partnership)**
- Guarantee the £1.13 billion Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal delivers real economic benefits for low income households across Renfrewshire. (Renfrewshire Council)
- **Develop a rent setting framework to minimise rent increases across the social housing sector across Renfrewshire and reduce the amount families have to pay towards their rent. (Community Planning Partnership)**
- **Build on past successful partnership working with local Housing Associations to enable an increase in the supply of affordable housing for people that need it and in places they want to live in. (Community Planning Partnership)**

3.6 In addition to the actions the Poverty Commission urges the partners to take, it also advocates that services should change the ways in which they act and organise to address stigma, involve people, remove barriers, use evidence and the use of resources.



4. Developing Response Of Renfrewshire Forum For Empowering Communities To The Recommendations Of ***Tackling Poverty In Renfrewshire***

4.1 Renfrewshire Forum For Empowering requires to develop a contribution on behalf of its members and the wider third sector in Renfrewshire to the twenty-four recommendations of *Tackling Poverty In Renfrewshire*. Engage Renfrewshire is holding a half-day event on Friday 29 May for third sector organisations in Renfrewshire to enable as many organisations as possible to hear about and discuss the recommendations of the Poverty Commission.

4.2 In addition to the Poverty Commission event, Renfrewshire Forum For Empowering Communities is asked to develop a response to the recommendations collectively and on behalf of its individual members. The third sector in Renfrewshire has a significant contribution to make on at least fourteen of the twenty-four recommendations, as outlined above. In particular, the Forum is asked to consider the following strategic issues, which relate to these recommendations:

1. What can the third sector in Renfrewshire contribute to attracting additional funding for neighbourhood regeneration and building a co-produced regeneration programme? What geographic areas of Renfrewshire would the Forum advise that Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership prioritise in terms of action on regeneration? (“Places” recommendations 1 and 2)
2. What training, skills development and living-wage level employment opportunities could third sector organisations develop (a) individually (b) by working together and (c) in collaboration with statutory or private sector partners? (“Pockets” recommendations 1 and 5 and “Prospects” recommendation 9)
3. What can Housing Associations do to minimise social housing sector rent increases and the supply of affordable housing (“Places” recommendations 4 and 5)
4. What can third sector agencies contribute to improving the impact of advice and advocacy and financial inclusion services? How can third sector agencies ensure that the people they support and who need these services access them? (“Pockets” recommendations 6 , 8 and 10)
5. What can third sector agencies contribute to ensuring that low income families access high-quality childcare and services reflect the specific needs of lone parents and disabled families? (“Pockets” recommendation 3)
6. What can third sector agencies contribute to ensuring access to transport for people moving in to work or training? (“Pockets” recommendation 4)



7. What is the contribution of the third sector to supporting good mental health in young people? (“Prospects” recommendation 3)
8. How can third sector agencies best articulate the data and intelligence they have about poverty to help address the attainment gap in schools? (“Prospects” recommendation 5)

In addition to the recommendations, third sector agencies have a significant contribution to make to address the “How organisations should work section” of *Tackling Poverty In Renfrewshire*. This is addressed by the following question:

9. How can third sector perspectives of people experiencing poverty or other issues that contribute to poverty help influence the way people are treated by agencies? (“How organisations should work”)
- 4.3 It is proposed that Engage Renfrewshire work with the members of Renfrewshire Forum For Empowering Communities to develop a response on the questions outlined above, to be submitted to Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership Board as part of its overall response to *Tackling Poverty In Renfrewshire*.