

To: Leadership Board

On: 14 June 2023

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Local Child Poverty Action Report 2023

1 Summary

- 1.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 requires that each Local Authority and each relevant Health Board must jointly prepare and publish a Local Child Poverty Action Report annually. This report must describe measures taken during the reporting year within the local authority area that reduce child poverty or improve outcomes for children living in poverty. It must also describe planned and proposed future actions.
- 1.2 This report sets out activities undertaken in Renfrewshire to reduce child poverty between April 2022 and March 2023, as well as planned and proposed actions for the future.
- 1.3 With a continued focus on recovery and renewal, the report highlights work being undertaken to respond and recover from the impacts of the pandemic and cost of living crisis in order to support those parents and families disproportionately impacted with issues such as low income, insecure employment, caring responsibilities and disabilities.
- 1.4 The report has been jointly developed by Renfrewshire Council, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC), and Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). It also includes information about partnership work to tackle child poverty across Renfrewshire's Community Planning Partnership.

- 1.5 Work is ongoing to develop the new Fairer Renfrewshire programme, as agreed as part of the Council's budget approved on 4 March 2022. The programme brings together activities and funding currently being progressed through the existing Tackling Poverty, Alcohol and Drugs and Social Renewal programmes, under one umbrella programme.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- Note the content of the draft Child Poverty Local Action Report 2022/23.
- Approves the Local Child Poverty Action Report for publication.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets out ambitious targets for the Scottish Government to significantly reduce child poverty in Scotland by 2030. The Act requires that local authorities publish a Local Child Poverty Action Report within three months of the end of each financial year.
- 3.2 The Report should provide detail of current, planned and proposed activity which is intended to reduce child poverty in the local authority area. It should also provide detail of preventative actions which will help young people avoid becoming parents in poverty by 2030.
- 3.3 With £1m per year invested in our Tackling Poverty Programme over 5 years, this continues to have a positive impact on low-income families in Renfrewshire, supporting projects such as Healthier Wealthier Children advice, Cost of the School Day, and provision of energy advice specifically to families. Significant additional funding has also been allocated to support low income households and families through the ongoing Fairer Renfrewshire programme.
- 3.4 Renfrewshire's Child Poverty Action Report recognises that a significant amount of work has been and is being done which is intended to reduce child poverty. The Report highlights the many activities carried out by Renfrewshire Council, Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership and wider partners which are intended to tackle child poverty across Renfrewshire.

4 Overview of Local Child Poverty Action Report

- 4.1 The Scottish Government has identified the three key drivers of child poverty as:
- income from employment;
 - costs of living; and

- income from Social Security and benefits in kind.

4.2 This report focusses on our longer-term response to the pandemic as well as the immediate cost of living crisis, highlighting actions and achievements throughout 2022/23. The report is structured to reflect the strategic priorities within the Scottish Government's Child Poverty Delivery Plan, Best Start Bright Futures published in Spring 2022:

- Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work
- Maximising the support available for families to lead dignified lives and meet their basic needs
- Supporting the next generation to thrive

4.3 **Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work**

- Our employability service, **Invest in Renfrewshire** offers a wide range of tailored supports to help residents on the journey towards and into employment. There has been a significant increase in the number of parents coming forward to use the service at 231 compared to 92 last year.
- The **Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership** have continued to plan and co-commission local employability services to help Renfrewshire residents make a successful transition towards employment and reduce unemployment in the area. This partnership working has helped reduce the unemployment rate to 3.1%,(3,635 people) now lower than the Scottish rate of 3.2%. There has also been an increase in the number of accredited **living wage** employers in Renfrewshire to 85.
- Our Procurement Team has realised 523 **Community Benefits** this year, with an additional 209 being offered if the contract hits the maximum threshold. 210 recruitment opportunities are amongst these, of which 111 went to those in Priority Groups.

4.4 **Maximising the support available for families to lead dignified lives and meet their basic needs**

- With £1m per year invested in our **Tackling Poverty Programme** over 5 years, this continued in 22/23 to have a positive impact on low-income families in Renfrewshire, supporting projects such as Healthier Wealthier Children advice, Cost of the School Day, and provision of energy advice specifically to families as well as supporting young people's mental health. This Programme is now under the auspices of our **Fairer Renfrewshire** work.

- **Advice** is a vitally important part of our efforts to tackle child poverty, with the Council supporting the Healthier Wealthier Children and School Support services which provide dedicated advice services to families with children. Apart from our own Advice Works service, the Council also provides funding to Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau (RCAB) to provide both a general advice service and a community legal advice service. This year additional services have been funded:
 - A Welfare Rights service based at RCAB
 - A 'Fair Work' service which deals with issues regarding to employment.
 - Energy advice at RCAB through our Fuel Insecurity Pilot
 - A benefit take-up campaign and debt campaign which were funded through the Social Renewal budget.
- In late 2021/22 we developed our **Financial Insecurity Winter Payment**. This payment, which is currently £150, has been paid to 4,724 households, of whom 2,522 were in the child poverty priority groups.
- In November 2022 we paid families an additional £50 per child for children receiving School Clothing Grant to help with **winter clothing**. Funding has been allocated in the 2023/24 budget to repeat this payment.
- Our successful **Winter Connections** Programme saw £70,000 allocated from the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme to fund 38 activities across Renfrewshire and a further £10,000 allocated across all Renfrewshire's libraries. Venues also provided hot drinks, snacks and food.
- Our **Energy Advocates** have saved clients almost £315,000 this year including ongoing savings, write offs and Warm Home Discounts.
- We top up our **Cost of the School Day** funding by £75,000 each year through our Tackling Poverty Programme. Food vouchers, energy top-ups, toiletries and warm clothing have been supplied this year as well as more usual items such as stationery and school uniforms.

4.5 **Supporting the next generation to thrive**

- There is still a clear commitment and expectation within Renfrewshire to raise **attainment** for all whilst closing the poverty-related attainment gap and data has been used to target approaches and develop interventions which support schools to raise attainment and address health and wellbeing needs.
- Work around **The Promise** has progressed well and there are currently **118 trained Promise Keepers** across Renfrewshire, with ambitious plans to grow this network in 2023/24. There are also a number of funded initiatives currently in place to provide whole family support as well as the retain our Promise Ambassador whose role is to help Renfrewshire and its planning partners to make changes which reflect what is important to Care Experienced children, young people, and families.

5 Next Steps

- 5.1 In 2022/23 one of our main priorities was gaining a better understanding of the needs of our families living in poverty, working with Poverty Alliance to establish a process to allow for meaningful engagement of people with direct experience of poverty to contribute to the development and implementation of local child poverty priorities. The Pilot of this lived experience group, renamed (by themselves) the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel, took place this year, and priority for 23/24 will be developing this work and involving diverse Council services to gain insight from the Panel.
- 5.2 In 22/23 we started to focus on collecting relevant data which will give us a better understanding of the picture of child poverty in Renfrewshire and will further our evidence-based policy making. This work will be ongoing into 23/24, with officers undertaking a 'deep dive' child poverty data exercise where we will pull data from internal Council as well as external sources to inform decision making and service delivery. While a key focus of this exercise will be the six child poverty priority groups, this exercise will also consider child poverty from a local area perspective – with a particular focus on understanding the drivers of marked increases in child poverty rates in some areas in Renfrewshire, and the potential actions that can be taken as a Council and with our partners.
- 5.4 Through new posts within our employability service, Invest in Renfrewshire, we will build engagement with more parents who could benefit from employability support and nurture effective partnerships with stakeholders as well as understand our data better.
- 5.5 Informed by our lived experience panel and better understanding of data, our Fairer Renfrewshire Programme will continue to support families and individuals in need across Renfrewshire.

Implications of the Report

- 1. **Financial** – No implications
- 2. **HR & Organisational Development** – No implications.
- 3. **Community/Council Planning** – The Report highlights the continued activities which support the key priorities set out in the Council and Community Plans to tackle inequality and widen opportunity.
- 4. **Legal** – No implications
- 5. **Property/Assets** – No implications.

6. **Information Technology** – No implications.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - It is anticipated that activities within the Report will have a positive impact on Equality and Human Rights considering the overrepresentation on equality groups within low-income households.
8. **Health & Safety** – No implications
9. **Procurement** – No implications
10. **Risk** – No implications
11. **Privacy Impact** – No implications.

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Local Child Poverty Action Report Renfrewshire 2022/23

www.renfrewshire.gov.uk



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1. Foreword

This is our fifth Local Child Poverty Action Report, recording actions which support our families and reduce child poverty in Renfrewshire. This year has been a particularly challenging one, as while the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have reduced, the cost of living crisis has emerged impacting all Renfrewshire households., Low income families have been affected the most especially through increases to energy and food prices. For many families who were managing last year, this year's inflation rates, increased interest rates and other increases in living costs have had a significant impact, leaving many more families struggling financially. Renfrewshire Council and its partners, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership and other Community Planning Partners have worked tirelessly to support all of our families in the face of these mounting financial pressures.

In Renfrewshire, we are committed to getting it right for children, families and communities. We recognise that too many families in Renfrewshire are facing the challenges of financial insecurity and poverty and in our strategic plans, fairness, equality and improving the lives of our children and families are key. This is reflected too in the way the Council works. Our Fairer Renfrewshire Programme overseen by our newly established Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee described in this report and our pilot involving people with lived experience of poverty in our decision and policy making, illustrate our focus on tackling Child Poverty, and this commitment to our families is reiterated in both our new Council and our refreshed Community Plan.

We are clear that although we can positively impact the lives of our families, we cannot solve poverty on a local basis and national actions are needed. As a Council, however, we continue to be ambitious for Renfrewshire, while recognising that we and many of our partners face renewed financial challenges. We have a clear vision that our children should inherit a Renfrewshire where their wellbeing is nurtured, their futures are bright, and their environment is safe and healthy. Tackling poverty is a vital part of this and we will continue to implement short and long term policies and actions which support Renfrewshire's families.

Alan Russell

Chief Executive, Renfrewshire Council

2. Executive Summary

This is the fifth Local Child Poverty Action Report produced by Renfrewshire Council. The report captures the range of activity that has taken place in Renfrewshire to reduce child poverty in 2022/23 and looks forward to the actions planned for 23/24 and beyond. This year the Cost of Living Crisis has had a significant impact on Renfrewshire's families and this report describes the actions we have put into place to help our families deal with the financial challenges facing them. These immediate supports, and short term actions sit alongside our existing initiatives and longer-term plans.

This report is set out in a way that reflects the three themes of the Scottish Government child poverty delivery plan, Best Start, Bright Futures:

- Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work
- Maximising the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs, and
- Supporting the next generation to thrive

2.1. Progress during 2022/23

2.1.1. Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work

- Our employability service, **Invest in Renfrewshire**, offers a wide range of tailored supports to help residents on the journey towards and into employment. There has been a significant increase in the number of parents coming forward to use the service at 231 compared to 92 last year.
- The **Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership** have continued to plan and co-commission local employability services to help Renfrewshire residents make a successful transition towards employment and reduce unemployment in the area. This partnership working has helped reduce the unemployment rate to 3.1%, (3,635 people) now lower than the Scottish rate of 3.2%. There has also been an increase in the number of accredited **living wage** employers in Renfrewshire to 85.

- Our Procurement Team has realised 523 **Community Benefits** this year, with an additional 209 being offered if the contract hits the maximum threshold. 210 recruitment opportunities are amongst these, of which 111 went to those in Priority Groups.

2.1.2. Maximising the support available for families to lead dignified lives and meet their basic needs

- With £1m per year invested in our **Tackling Poverty Programme** over 5 years, this continued to have a positive impact on low-income families in Renfrewshire in 22/23. The programme supported projects such as Healthier Wealthier Children advice, Cost of the School Day, and provision of energy advice, specifically to families, as well as supporting young people's mental health. This Programme is now under the auspices of our **Fairer Renfrewshire** work.
- **Advice** is a vitally important part of our efforts to tackle child poverty, with the Council supporting the Healthier Wealthier Children and School Support services which provide dedicated advice services to families with children. Apart from our own Advice Works service, the Council also provides funding to Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau (RCAB) to provide both a general advice service and a community legal advice service. This year additional services have been funded:
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2.1.3. Supporting the next generation to thrive

- There is still a clear commitment and expectation within Renfrewshire to raise **attainment** for all whilst closing the poverty-related attainment gap and data has been used to target approaches and develop interventions which support schools to raise attainment and address health and wellbeing needs.
- Work around **The Promise** has progressed well and there are currently **118 trained Promise Keepers** across Renfrewshire, with ambitious plans to grow this network in 2023/24. There are also a number of funded initiatives currently in place to provide whole family support as well as the retain our Promise Ambassador whose role is to help Renfrewshire and its planning partners to make changes which reflect what is important to Care Experienced children, young people, and families.

2.2. Priorities for 2023/24

In 2022/23, one of our main priorities was gaining a better understanding of the needs of our families living in poverty, working with Poverty Alliance to establish a process to allow for meaningful engagement of people with direct experience of poverty to contribute to the development and implementation of local child poverty priorities. The Pilot of this lived experience group, renamed (by themselves) the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel, took place this year, and priority for 23/24 will be developing this work and involving diverse Council services to gain insight from the Panel.

In 22/23, we started to focus on collecting relevant data which will give us a better understanding of the picture of child poverty in Renfrewshire and will further our evidence-based policy making. This work will be ongoing into 23/24, with officers undertaking a ‘deep dive’ child poverty data exercise where we will pull data from internal Council as well as external sources to inform decision making and service delivery. While a key focus of this exercise will be the six child poverty priority groups, this exercise will also consider child poverty from a local area perspective – with a

particular focus on understanding the drivers of marked increases in child poverty rates in some areas in Renfrewshire, and the potential actions that can be taken as a Council and with our partners.

Through new posts within our employability service, Invest in Renfrewshire, we will build engagement with more parents who could benefit from employability support and nurture effective partnerships with stakeholders as well as understand our data better

Informed by our lived experience panel and better understanding of data, our Fairer Renfrewshire Programme will continue to support families and individuals in need across Renfrewshire.

This year we have a new Council Plan, providing organisational direction and with a cross-cutting theme – **improving outcomes for children and families** and a refreshed Community Plan for our Community Planning Partnership. Taken in tandem, these plans set the direction for a fairer Renfrewshire, where all our people have the best chances to live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives, to feel safe, supported and empowered to unlock the strength of our collective potential, and we will work across Council services to realise this.

While we recognise that much has been achieved this year, we will continue to work with NHSGGC, our Health and Social Care Partnership and many other external and third sector partners, in communities and across all services to ensure our low-income families are supported and child poverty is reduced.

Priority Actions for 2023/24	
1	Develop Fairer Renfrewshire Programme
2	Carry out a ‘deep dive’ into local child poverty data, to inform future work
3	Develop and support Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel to deliberate on and guide policy and practice
4	Expand opportunities for parents to enter, sustain and progress at work through the Parental Employability Support Fund
5	Pilot models of dedicated advice provision for families with children
6	Monitor the ongoing impacts of the Cost-of-Living Crisis, continuing to flexibly respond to emerging issues
7	Join up support for families within communities and across partners

3. About Child Poverty

3.1. Scottish Government Targets

In March 2022, the Scottish Government published its second child poverty delivery plan, [Best Start Bright Futures](#) under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

Best Start, Bright Futures sets out a vision for Scotland, the changes that are needed to achieve this, and the actions Scottish Government intend to take with partners to deliver that change for the period 2022 to 2026.

The refreshed Scottish Government child poverty delivery plan ‘Best Start, Bright Futures’ focusses on three key themes and this, Renfrewshire’s report, is set out in a way that reflects those themes:

- Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work
- Maximising the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs
- Supporting the next generation to thrive

Child Poverty Targets were set by the Scottish Parliament in 2017 and are as follows:

By 2030, after housing costs

Less than 10% of children live in households that are in **relative poverty**

Less than 5% of children live in households that are in **absolute poverty**

Less than 5% of children live in households that are in **combined low income and material deprivation**

The statutory income targets are ambitious and relate to the following measures of poverty:

Relative poverty: a child is in relative poverty if they live in a household where equivalised income for the financial year in question is less than 60 per cent of the median equivalised net income for that financial year.

Absolute poverty: a child is in absolute poverty if they live in a household with an income below 60 per cent of the median equivalised net income in 2010–11.

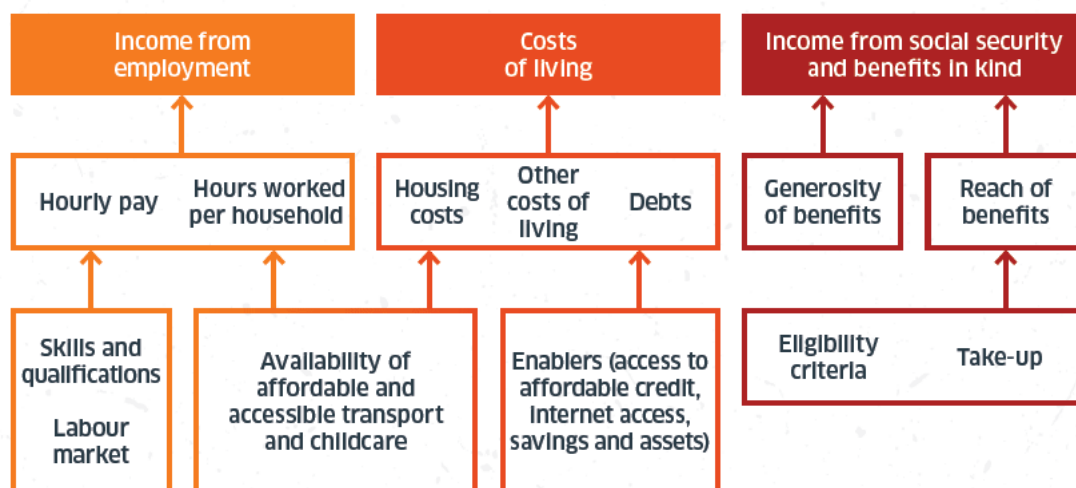
Combined low income and material deprivation: a child is in combined low income and material deprivation if they live in a household with an income below 70 per cent of the equivalised median net income for that year and are unable to afford a number of basic goods and services (material deprivation).

Persistent poverty: a child is in persistent poverty if they have been living in Scotland and in relative poverty for three of the past four years.

3.2. Drivers of Poverty

The three key drivers of child poverty are identified by the Scottish Government as:

- Income from employment
- Costs of living
- Income from social security and benefits in kind



In Renfrewshire, focussing efforts on these drivers as well as enhancing children's wellbeing, and supporting them to achieve their potential and avoid becoming parents in poverty in the future will help mitigate the consequences of poverty both in the short and longer term.

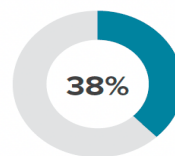
3.3. Priority Groups

'Best Start, Bright Futures' builds on action delivered through the first Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 'Every Child, Every Chance'. This plan identified six priority family types that face additional barriers to moving out of poverty:

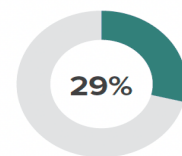
- Lone Parents
- Families that include a disabled adult or child
- Large families with 3 or more children
- Minority Ethnic families
- Youngest child is under 1 year old
- Young Mother aged under 25 years old

Focus continues on these priority families as reporting continues to show that almost 90% of all children in poverty in Scotland live within the six priority family types.

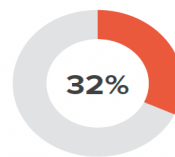
Lone Parents



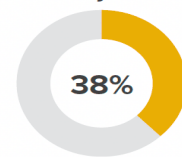
Disabled



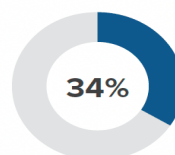
3+ Children



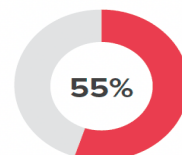
Minority Ethnic



Youngest Child Aged <1



Mothers Aged <25



3.4. Child Poverty in Renfrewshire

In March 2023, the Department for Work and Pensions released new statistics on children in low-income families. These statistics provide information on the number and proportion of children living in relative and absolute low income, before housing costs, across the United Kingdom. This data is available to ward level, and therefore provides local area insights for smaller geographical areas.

The proportion of children in low-income families in Renfrewshire has been steadily rising since 2014/15. Data for 2020/21 showed a fall in child poverty, with rates continuing to rise in the 2021/22 financial year. It is advised that the data from 2020/2021 has significant caveats, as data collection was affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Figures from this year are subject to additional uncertainty for several reasons and therefore caution should be taken when using this data in comparison with other years.

For 21/22, the percentage of children in relative low income, before housing costs in Renfrewshire is 20%, representing 5,960 children. The rate for Scotland is 20.8%. In 2020/21, the rate recorded for Renfrewshire was 14.9%, and for 2019/20 was 18%. All wards in Renfrewshire saw rises in the proportion of children in low-income families, with some wards more marked than others. There continues to be particularly high proportions of children in low-income families in both Paisley North West and Renfrew South and Gallowhill wards, with children living in relative low income rates at 31.5% and 36.8% respectively and a particularly sharp increase for the Renfrew South and Gallowhill ward.

Percentage of Children (aged under 16) living in **relative low income families**, Ward, FYE 2015 to 2022, United Kingdom

Ward	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	change in % since 19/20
Renfrew South and Gallowhill	16.0%	18.5%	19.9%	23.2%	24.9%	29.3%	27.2%	36.8%	7.5%
Paisley Northwest	19.5%	20.1%	23.7%	26.6%	28.8%	29.5%	23.2%	31.5%	2.0%
Paisley Southwest	12.5%	12.4%	14.3%	16.8%	19.8%	19.7%	16.2%	22.8%	3.1%
Paisley East and Central	13.8%	12.9%	17.1%	18.4%	18.8%	18.7%	16.2%	21.9%	3.2%
Johnstone South and Elderslie	12.4%	13.6%	17.4%	20.6%	18.1%	19.4%	14.8%	21.7%	2.3%
Scotland	14.1%	14.5%	16.3%	18.0%	17.9%	18.9%	16.0%	20.8%	1.9%
Renfrewshire	11.8%	12.3%	14.2%	16.6%	16.8%	18.0%	14.9%	20.0%	2.0%
Renfrew North and Braehead	12.4%	13.4%	13.8%	18.5%	18.3%	18.3%	14.8%	19.5%	1.2%
Johnstone North, Kilbarchan, Howwood and Lochwinnoch	9.3%	10.0%	10.7%	14.4%	14.6%	15.8%	13.2%	18.4%	2.6%
Paisley Northeast and Ralston	10.6%	12.6%	13.7%	16.4%	15.2%	17.1%	13.2%	17.4%	0.3%
Paisley Southeast	7.7%	8.5%	10.2%	11.0%	12.2%	15.5%	13.8%	16.5%	1.0%
Erskine and Inchinnan	7.8%	7.7%	9.6%	10.2%	9.7%	11.4%	10.4%	13.6%	2.2%
Houston, Crosslee and Linwood	10.5%	10.8%	11.1%	13.0%	12.7%	13.0%	10.1%	13.1%	0.1%
Bishopton, Bridge of Weir and Langbank	6.9%	5.8%	6.8%	7.8%	7.2%	7.5%	5.7%	7.7%	0.2%

We are working to better understand the reasons for these sharp rises in certain Wards as part of our 'Deep Dive' into data, and ensure we are targeting supports in the right areas.

4. Strategic Context

4.1. Fairer Renfrewshire Programme

Renfrewshire Council is in the process of developing and delivering a new Fairer Renfrewshire Programme. This brings together all previous programmes that have been developed to tackle the inequalities that exist across Renfrewshire's communities, including those relating to Tackling Poverty, Alcohol and Drugs and the COVID recovery Social Renewal Programme.

At Council on 2 March 2023, members outlined a number of investments including bringing together Fairer Renfrewshire, Tackling Poverty and Social Renewal reserve funds into a single resource estimated at £5million.

In August 2022, our newly established Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee met for the first time. This Sub-Committee considers matters relating to poverty and financial insecurity, including food and fuel insecurity and the Cost of Living Crisis. With oversight of the Council's response to the Alcohol and Drug Commission report and the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme, it makes recommendations to the Council and the Leadership Board regarding those matters.

A Fairer Renfrewshire Officer Group has also been established which currently meets monthly and is chaired by the Head of Policy and Partnerships.

Establishment of the Sub-Committee and Officer Group not only keeps a strong focus on poverty, but also brings varied Council services together with Renfrewshire HSCP to work collaboratively to engender an increased impact on outcomes for our households who are living in poverty. This new way of working illustrates our commitment to tackling Child Poverty and this commitment to our families is reiterated in both our new Council and our refreshed Community Plan.

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

01

Improving
financial security

02

Advancing
equality of
opportunity

03

Building
community
capacity and
resilience

04

Listening to lived
experience

4.2. Council and Community Plans

The Council Plan is a key strategic document for Council employees, local people, businesses, partner organisations and voluntary organisations, setting out what the Council is aiming to achieve over the next 5 years. Alongside Renfrewshire's Community Plan, the Council Plan provides organisational direction, ensuring that the key strategic priorities of the Council translate into specific actions within service improvement plans. This provides a 'golden thread', illustrating the role all Council services play in delivering these objectives.

Our new [Council Plan](#) approved in September 2022, sets out our strategic priorities under five themes – Place, Economy, Fair, Green, Living our Values. The Plan also describes a cross-cutting theme – **improving outcomes for children and families**. Every one of the 5 strategic outcomes should directly contribute to this outcome and demonstrate that services are working together to get it right for children, families and communities.

The new Council Plan recognises the financial challenge that Renfrewshire, like all local authorities, currently faces. However, despite the scale of the challenge, the Council remains committed to building on the many strengths of our communities and our resources, and delivering strong universal services that support everyone to live well and embrace opportunities and our wish for all of Renfrewshire's children to have loving, happy lives where everyone can enjoy the same opportunities and where wellbeing is nurtured.

In tandem with the new Council Plan, a refresh of our 10 year Community Plan took place this year. With 2022 being the mid-term of our 2017-2027 Plan, this has now been reviewed, taking into account the significant changes to the context in which the Council and its partners are operating as a result of issues such as climate change, COVID 19 and the Cost of Living Crisis. The timing of this refresh was particularly important in order to assess the impact of these issues on local businesses, communities and residents.

3 specific areas of focus have been identified by partners to guide their programme of work over the remaining 5 years of the Community Plan, which will be delivered through 12 priority actions.

One area of focus is supporting low income families and the associated actions are:

- Provide opportunities and support to parents to enter, sustain and progress at work
- Join up support for families within communities and across partners
- Provide support that allows families to live dignified lives and respond to the cost of living crisis, and
- Work together to support children and young people at risk of trauma and harm

These actions fit well with Best Start, Bright Futures themes and, along with our Council Plan, Fairer Renfrewshire Programme, and all the other work describes in this report, illustrates our commitment to addressing child poverty alongside our partners.

4.3. Renfrewshire's Health and Social Care Partnership

Renfrewshire HSCP Strategic Plan, Shaping Our Future 2022 -2025, focuses on Prevention and Early Intervention under key themes. These include the Healthier Futures theme which highlights commitment to continue to work with partners in Renfrewshire to contribute to reducing child poverty locally by detailing actions we continue to work and report on. See the report here for more details of the HSCP priorities.

Renfrewshire HSCP will continue to work within a number of plans and use them to influence our Poverty work going forward. These include:

- A Scotland Where Everybody Thrives - Public Health Scotland, and
- Turning the Tide through Prevention The Public Health Strategy
- A stronger more resilient Scotland 2022-2023
- NHSGGC Remobilisation Plan 2022
- Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance 2022

This report has a strong input from the HSCP Health Improvement Team who focus on prevention and early intervention.

4.4. Renfrewshire's Children's Services Partnership

Throughout Scotland, local authorities and health boards work with community planning partners to ensure services delivered to children, young people and their families are the best they can be.

In Renfrewshire, we do this by listening to our communities to identify what support people need, why they need it, when they need it and how best it can be provided. This work takes place through Renfrewshire's Children's Services Partnership (RCSP) whose members include the Council, other public sector organisations, and the third sector. Together, we identify local priorities and plan how we can join up to add value and deliver services to children, young people and their families that make a real difference to their lives.

Our three-year Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership Plan is being developed to cover the period 2023 – 2026. It will set out our focus for Renfrewshire's children, young people and families and identifies the steps we will take to improve their lives.

We looked at what was happening around us to understand national and community priorities and how these link in with our vision children's service planning. This includes work around The Promise, children's rights GIRFEC, Whole Family Wellbeing and Poverty. Based on what is known about the needs of children and young people of Renfrewshire, we have identified four outcomes that partners will work together to deliver.

1. We will ensure our children and young people enjoy good physical and mental health
2. We will ensure our children and young people are safe and loved
3. We will ensure our children and young people have their rights protected and their voices heard
4. We will ensure our children and young people achieve and make positive contributions to their community

The plan for the next three years will outline actions and outcomes and will be monitored by a monitoring and evaluation sub-group which prepares a progress report for each meeting of the Partnership Board.

4.5. How we work with people

In 2022/23, we have been working with Poverty Alliance to develop a model of participation designed to have a practical impact on local policy making which will result in meaningful engagement on the part of both people with lived experience and policy makers.

Using £75,000 of funding originally allocated through the Social Renewal Budget, we have been running a 6 month 'test of change', establishing a panel of people of people with lived experience of poverty to help develop local policy and practice. Working in partnership alongside Poverty Alliance as an expert national organisation and STAR Project as an expert local organisation a diverse panel of 15 has been recruited.

The Panel met formally six times, as well as meeting in-between panel meetings to debrief and develop the work alongside a community artist to create a record of their experience. Panel sessions have been attended by the Convenor and Deputy Convenor of the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee and Council Officers and as well as setting their own priorities, the panel have been involved in discussion around holiday provision in Renfrewshire.

Looking forward, an evaluation of the process has been carried out by Poverty Alliance to explore how these types of participation processes can inform work, and to inform the development of the model moving forward and a decision to extend the existing panel arrangements for a further year has been taken.

We also intend to bring the Panel together with the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee and fairer Renfrewshire Officers Group to discuss and showcase the work of the Panel and the plans ahead.

The conversations will help people on low incomes get their voices heard on the policies and decisions that most impact their lives and help us understand their needs, especially those in the Child Poverty Priority Groups.

5. Theme 1: Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work

Income from employment is one of the 3 main drivers of child poverty. As such, increasing income from employment for unemployed and low-income parents is a key objective nationally and in Renfrewshire.

5.1. Local Employability Partnership

Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership (RLEP) is the local strategic employability partnership consisting of partner agencies from the Renfrewshire Community Planning Structure. It is chaired by Renfrewshire Council and its purpose is to support the implementation of local and national employability policy (No One Left Behind) through collective leadership, joint planning and co-commissioning. In doing so, the partnership, working closely with local delivery partners, makes best use of resources available to deliver effective needs-led employability services that help Renfrewshire residents make a successful transition towards employment and reduce unemployment in the area.

The COVID pandemic had a massive impact on the rate and number of residents claiming out of work benefits in Renfrewshire. At its peak in August 2021 (6.8% equating to 7,765 residents) Renfrewshire was above both the Scottish and UK levels. The very strong local partnership working during the pandemic has greatly helped the recovery process and the figure has reduced significantly to **3,635**, 3.1% (Feb23) now below the Scottish rate of 3.2%. Data shows us that:

- The rate is significantly higher for males (4.1% compared to 2.2% for females).
- The proportion of young people (18-24) on the claimant count remains higher than for any other age group at 4.4% with the 50+ group having the lowest rate of 2.1% however the rate for young people is reducing.
- Our disability employment rate is lower than Scotland (49.5% against 51.2%) however the gap between these has dropped and the rate in Renfrewshire shows an upward trend.
- Our economically inactive group is a cause for concern, with a significant increase in the number of people registering a long-term health issue now at 12,800, 47.7% compared to the Scottish figure of 31.9%. The rate continues to increase.
- Our Employment rate for ethnic minority residents is significantly higher than the average, 82.5% (white 75.9%). This contrasts with the Scotland rate of 62.5% (white 74.6%).

RLEP is committed to reducing those inequalities that exist in relation to employment between different geographic areas and for different groups who face significant barriers to work. Success as a Partnership goes beyond reducing unemployment at a Renfrewshire level to reducing the gaps that exist for these areas and groups.

Recognising the key contribution that employability services can make to tackling child poverty, RLEP's performance framework includes a range of indicators to help measure progress in relation to increasing income from employment of parents with low income as well as other outcomes and indicators such as tackling youth unemployment and increasing the disability employment rate and increasing engagement and positive outcomes for all RLEP priority groups. RLEPs Employability Delivery Plan for 2022-25 [here](#) provides more detail on this.

Renfrewshire LEP has established a number of sub-groups focussing in on priority groups and all of these will consider employability related actions to tackle child poverty. A new Parental Employment sub-group has been established to ensure we maximise the impact of the new Scottish Government Resources for parental employment support. Other key groups are the RLEP Health Conditions and Recovery sub-group and the RLEP Disability sub-group both chaired by HSCP managers. These groups bring together key stakeholders and support effective employability service development and delivery.

5.2. Parental Employment Support

There have been significant effort and resources contributed by the Scottish Government and local employability partners working in partnership with local employers from the public, private and third sectors to support parental employment.

In 2019, the Scottish Government launched a Parental Employment Support Fund (PESF) to target both employed and unemployed families who face barriers to progressing their careers, including help to gain qualifications, improving skills or work experience; money advice, and motivational support. This support is intended to increase annual income, lifting families out of poverty. PESF provides person-centred help for parents to address their barriers to work.

Following publication of Best Start, Bright Futures, the Scottish Governments new Child Poverty Action Plan, the resources to be allocated locally for PESF have increased significantly and will enable RLEP to further develop the scope and scale of support available to parents.

Whilst Renfrewshire Council's Employability Service, Invest in Renfrewshire, is the key delivery partner for PESF, RLEP has already started to commission additional complementary provision for 2023/24.

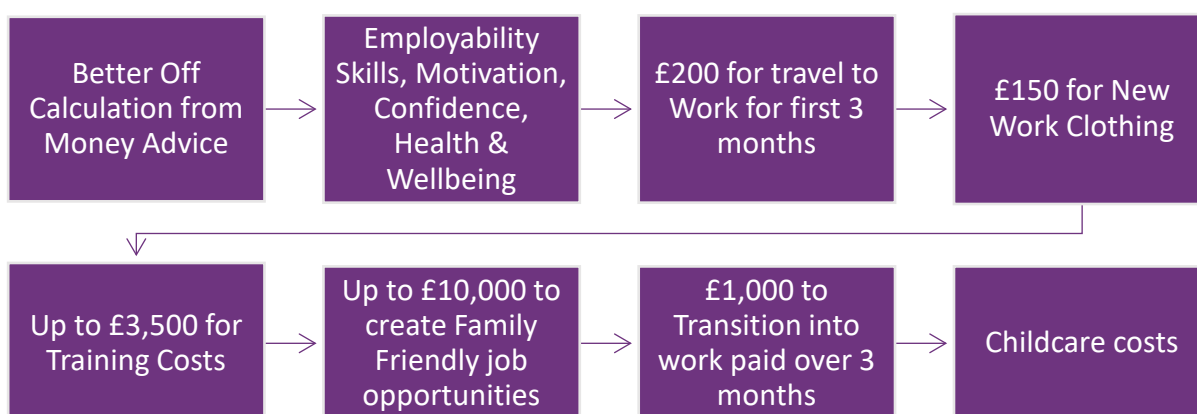
Parents are able to access all LEP commissioned provision, however, some specific programmes have been developed for unemployed and underemployed parents with £149,000 of funding allocated to four programmes to date, which will offer 137 places:

- **Enable's 'Progress for Parents'** service has been designed specifically for parents who are disabled and/or have disabled children to support you to progress into and within work.
- **Barnardos 'First Steps to Work'** an innovative employability programme for Parents and Kinship Carers who are unemployed or on a low income
- **Home-Start's 'Empowering Parents'** programme targeted to families within Child Poverty priority groups to build their confidence and resilience as a first step towards considering life goals and ambitions.
- **West College Scotland** to engage and support student parents to maximise progression towards employment.

Renfrewshire's Employability Service, Invest in Renfrewshire, are currently recruiting for a number of new posts to ensure our PESF impact on low-income households and local child poverty levels is maximised.

This will include a PESF Coordinator post which will have responsibility for the effective management of the PESF team, ensuring strong and effective partnerships are developed and maintained across a range of services to integrate and align services and supports to deliver improved results for parents; a research post to more effectively gather and use data to target services and a number of advisor posts building both our capacity to engage with more parents who could benefit from employability support and to nurture effective partnerships with stakeholders and those with lived experience.

Renfrewshire's individual practical and financial support includes:



We offer person-centred help for parents to address their barriers to work, including childcare advice and assistance and English language support. Training that will help a parent to progress into a job or progress in work, that is not available via LEP commissioned programmes, can be funded on an individual basis up to a value of £3,000

In addition the service offers:

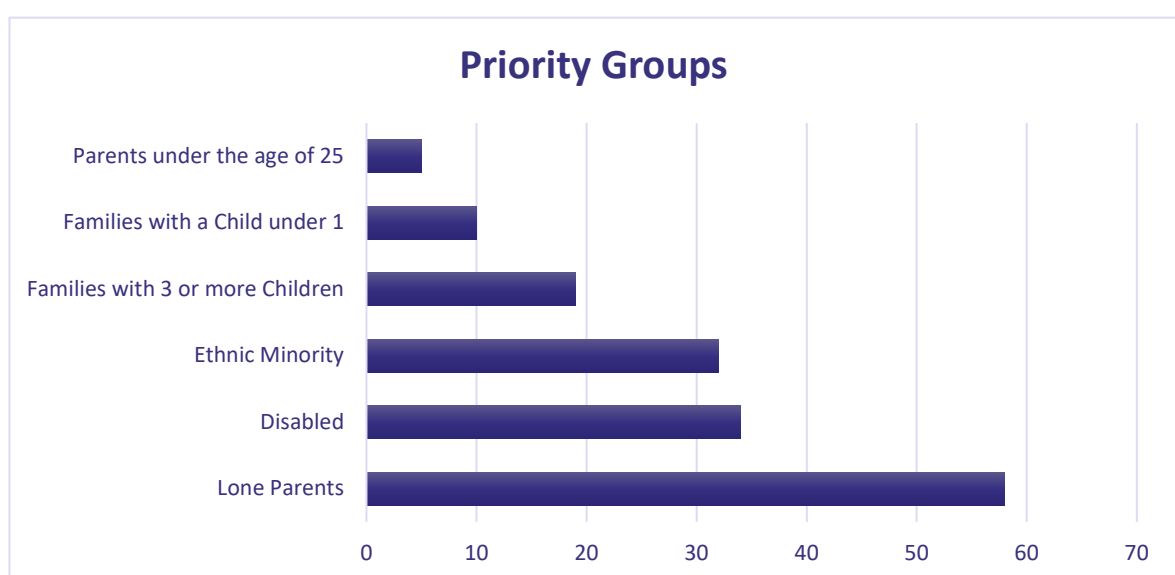
- Specialist employability support for parents with a disability/long term condition or who have a child with a disability/long term condition. Parents with other significant challenges such as having a criminal conviction can also access specialist support.
- Targeted support to tackle the increased challenge of in-work poverty by helping parents already in work through the provision of training and employability support to remain active in the workplace and gain progression through a rewarding career.
- Confidential income and money advice which includes: benefit checks and help with any claim processes; better off in work calculations; help with debts as these can be a barrier to work; creation of a bespoke budget for the family; and budgeting skills support to ensure long lasting effect.

- Employment Recruitment Incentives aligned to parents, in particular for those with significant barriers including those parents in the 6 Child Poverty Priority groups
- Further work with employers to create family/parent friendly working conditions and working patterns e.g. school hour posts.

With increasing resources, more outreach work will be developed in partnership with third sector groups and organisations and other partners such as the Health and Social Care Partnership to raise awareness of the many benefits of employment to families and the support available to parents to help them start their own journeys towards work. Employability staff will work closely with organisations that already have good relationships with parents, in particular those working with the child poverty target groups. The new PESF Coordinator will lead on this work, while the new research officer post will support Invest and the LEP work with the same groups and organisations to improve our data and evidence base for our PES support. This will include supporting and facilitating lived experience engagement.

5.3. Progress in 2022/23

The numbers of parents registering for employment support within the 22/23 period has increased significantly from the previous year (92) to **231**, with the majority being unemployed. The graph below shows the profile of parents supported against the 6 child poverty priority groups, the largest group being single parents. The majority of parents supported are women across a range of ages with the largest group being the 25-40 age group.



When registering with the service, clients identify different barriers that they feel hold them back when trying to enter employment, with mental health being the most commonly reported issue. The data reflects our increasing partnership working with the third sector and other partners such as Renfrewshire HSCP, criminal justice, housing and resettlement programmes to engage those with barriers to employment.

More detailed data gathered on the nature of health/disability shows mental health is a very significant barrier that we need to consider in the development of provision for parents. Provision of support for parents with a disability/long term condition or with a child with a disability/long term condition is a key priority for the LEP with several specialist employment programmes in place.

The majority of parents engaging with support do not have advanced level qualifications. The LEP has commissioned a new service to support parent students at West College Scotland to sustain their further and higher education and to try and encourage more unemployed/low-income parents into further and higher education, recognising the impact that qualification levels can have on earning potential.

Invest and LEP funded providers offer a range of barrier removal, prevocational and vocational training opportunities and participants take part in a range of activities. Group activities cover a wide range of topics including interview skills, team working etc., as well as formal accredited training such as care, first aid, driver training and security training, which enhance and develop the attributes, skill and knowledge required to support progression into sustainable employment (as detailed below).

Given the barriers parents have to work through, it can take time to progress through the stages of employability support required. It is important to work at the pace that parents are comfortable with. Over a quarter of parents engaging last year have already progressed into employment and over a half are either in full time training/education or are continuing to progress towards work.

5.4. Supporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Throughout 2022/23, our services saw a significant number of people arriving in Renfrewshire through resettlement schemes for Syrian and then Ukrainian nationals.

This included a number of families and a new Refugee Employment Support Coordination Group is now in place to support refugees and asylum seekers based in Renfrewshire. It aims to provide a strategic and operational overview on employability policy and practice to address common

employment barriers facing refugees and asylum Seekers and support the implementation of local and national employability policy for refugees and asylum seekers through collective leadership, joint planning and co-commissioning. Membership includes, Scottish Refugee Council, DWP, Engage Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire Council- Invest; Community Learning and Development; and Housing (Resettlement Team), and the Mears group

The group has worked together to ensure language support is available and around 8 Ukrainian clients have accessed paid traineeships by Invest and other council services, with language/translation support a key aspect of their roles. Currently 14 parents are being supported by Invest in Renfrewshire.

5.5. Procurement

Renfrewshire Council is committed to maximising Community Benefits through its procurement activities by including specific Community Benefit Clauses and targets within procurement contracts. These cover payment of the Living Wage as well as targeted employment and training opportunities. Fair work practices in areas such as zero hour contracts and worker representation are also scored.

Community Benefits are targeted to child poverty priority groups and evaluated as part of the tendering process and monitored on a quarterly basis. Community benefits this year are significantly higher than last (198) the confirmed number of community benefits are 523 but with a further 209 being offered only if the contract spend hits the maximum threshold.

5.6. Economic Recovery Funding

In February 2022, the Scottish Government provided £80m to Local Authorities to provide support to businesses and low-income households. The purpose of this funding is to support business recovery and cost of living impacts on low-income households. Renfrewshire received £2.654m to support a number of initiatives and deliver interventions that best meet that local need. There were 5 broad areas of support agreed under the LACER fund for Renfrewshire. These were:

- Continuing or Creating Employment for unemployed people
- Flexible Training Fund to increase employment opportunities
- Financial support to unemployed people
- Supporting Business
- Financial insecurity payments

Activities supported include:

- Grant support to 80 businesses to the employment of a young unemployed person (Kickstart Plus) for an additional 6 months
- A total of 64 paid placements / traineeships / jobs or trainee style extensions were provided. Participants were from a range of priority groups for Renfrewshire Long Term Unemployed Ukrainian Refugees and part time/ school hour posts for unemployed parents.
- A flexible training fund for 250 UC claimants (either unemployed or in low paid work) to increase their skills and qualifications to secure work prepare them for higher paid employment.
- A range of training and support was provided to 67 individuals requiring support, for example, LGV license training and certification and First Aid training and certification.
- 2,000 Financial Insecurity Winter Payments supported for people experiencing financial insecurity as a result of the cost of living crisis.

Full details are in the update [here](#) and this work will be supported and extended for a further year.

5.7. Fair Work Renfrewshire

The Council funded Fair Work Renfrewshire service was launched in October 2021 by Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau. This £100,000, two-year project provides employment advice to support clients to retain employment wherever possible and where this is not possible, ensure they are supported to obtain their full redundancy entitlement as well as access the correct benefits.

From 1 April 2022 to 28 March 2023, the Fair Work Project assisted **253** clients, with a total of **£25,974.19** in client financial gain and the issues the service has supported clients with include situations involving grievance or disciplinary processes, pay and entitlements, dismissal and terms and conditions of employment. In many cases there is no financial gain counted as employment is maintained, however this makes a massive difference to household income for clients.

5.8. Childcare

Excellent progress has been made in relation to the implementation of 1140 hours of high-quality early learning and childcare for all eligible children across Renfrewshire, which helps support families into work. Since August 2022, all eligible children will receive 1140 hours at nursery, an

approved childminder or a combination of both. Most of our nursery centres are open before and after the school day across the full year to support working parents.

6. Theme 2: Maximising the support available for families to lead dignified lives and meet their basic needs

This year, supporting families to make the most of their money has been paramount. The Cost of Living Crisis has hit everyone's pockets, but it is for families who had low incomes before the crisis began that it has hit hardest. This year, Renfrewshire Council has targeted resources to support local households, working to ensure their income is maximised and outgoings are minimised. In our partnerships with Renfrewshire HSCP, the third sector and more widely, we have worked together to mitigate the Cost of Living Crisis where we can and ensure our citizens know where to turn for support and advice.

Over the winter period, we worked with partners to deliver the Winter Connections programme - encouraging people to connect and participate in activities in warm and welcoming spaces across communities in Renfrewshire. Both our longer-term Tackling Poverty Programme and our more recent initiatives under the banner of Fairer Renfrewshire work include projects and activities which help families living in poverty.

Our ongoing commitment to advice provision is illustrated in the number of services and projects the Council funds and our Advice Partnership continues, with advice providers across Council Services, the third sector, Scottish Social Security and most recently NHS GGC coming together to share information and work to reduce gaps and coordinate services.

Our innovative affordable credit pilot has continued by attracting external funding; our digital initiatives bring together a range of partners working together to support the digitally excluded, and our housing strategies alongside our work to bolster administered funds and maximise benefits for families help make families' money go further and help them avoid financial crises. Throughout Renfrewshire, across Council services, and with a variety of partners, our actions help families reduce their cost of living and lead dignified lives.

6.1. Income maximisation through advice

Throughout 2022-23, income maximisation through advice has been a focus for the Council and its partners. The Cost of Living Crisis has made it more important than ever that families are supported

to claim the benefits, financial support and benefits in kind they are entitled to, as well as manage debt.

The Council's Advice Works service continues to provide advice with regards to money, debt and benefits as well as providing advice and representation at benefit appeals. Overall, the financial gain for clients this year from new claims to benefit was over **£14 million**, with an additional **£1,879,052** in mandatory reconsiderations and appeals. Advice Works have also helped clients manage **£1,169,891** in debt. Advice Works provides the Healthier Wealthier Children advice, as well as that offered to all schools in Renfrewshire. During our Winter Connections programme, Advice Works also offered outreach in libraries.

The Council funded Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau's (RCAB) general service gave over **8,300** appointments and has gained **£1,807,916** for the people of Renfrewshire this year. This is in addition to the **397** people seen by the Legal Service, who had additional gains of over **£140,000**. New debt cases this year have led to £2,120,139.92 debt being managed.

Overall, between the two services, **9,873** clients fell into Child Poverty Priority families, with the disabled child/adult in a family being the largest category. **3,941** seen by RCAB and **5,932** by Advice Works.

This year, Advice Works and RCAB have continued to work closely to ensure people are getting the benefits they are entitled to and the best money advice. They worked together on a **benefit take up campaign**, developed with partners and successfully launched during November 2022, with the aim of maximising income for low-income households. 60 clients of all ages were seen during this week, with support given around a number of benefits.

We have continued to work closely with Social Security Scotland to ensure that referral between our clients and theirs is as simple as possible to maximise income for parents and parents to be. With both the Local Delivery Lead and Client Support Adviser Team Leader being part of our Advice Partnership, we can ensure relevant information is shared.

In our benefits take up work, we have specifically designed marketing materials around benefits for parents, including Best Start Grants and Scottish Child Payment to maximise numbers coming forward to claim these benefits. These have been circulated in schools, libraries and community settings, with all of our Winter Connections venues receiving these.

6.2. Advice pilots

Recognising the impact of dedicated income maximisation support for families with children, looking forward to 2023/24, work is planned to redesign current advice provision for families to increase the capacity and reach of our advice services.

From 2023/24 two advice pilots will be run – a **family advice service** within Advice Works and a **Schools Advice** service within RCAB.

£140,000 of Fairer Renfrewshire funding has been allocated to pilot the new dedicated family advice service, which will be established within Advice Works, providing a team of income advisors who will develop relationships and pro-active referral routes with Council services and partners, including:

- existing services and referrals routes for families such as Healthier Wealthier Children and Families First.
- key emerging policy and service areas focussed on holistic support for families such as Parental Employability and Whole Family Wellbeing.
- early years and primary school settings, complementary to the advice service for secondary schools being designed with Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau. In particular, exploring how the service can work alongside school office staff to address issues such as school meal debt more proactively.
- developing relationships with community and voluntary sector organisations providing support for families, with a particular focus on reaching the child poverty priority family groups.

The newly formed team will work with families 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.

£100,000 has been allocated to Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau to support an embedded model of advice in all Renfrewshire secondary schools. This service will provide advice to:

- all secondary school attendees,
- their families and carers,
- school staff who may approach the service about a pupil/pupil's family,
- school staff who may approach the service about their own concerns.

The advice provided by the project will cover the following areas which support families to maximise their income:

- Welfare Benefits including Scottish Benefits
- Money and debt
- Free School Meals, School Clothing Grants and other benefits in kind
- Benefits that come directly to young people, such as free bus travel and EMA

RCAB will work with school staff, including guidance, pastoral and home link staff to reach families who are struggling with money issues and ensure swift, proactive, and where possible, preventative support is provided. This particular service is a pilot to establish the most effective way to support young people and their families to maximise their income through utilisation of school premises and staff.

6.3. Healthier Wealthier Children

The Healthier Wealthier Children (HWC) service works closely with antenatal and community child health services to target pregnant women and families with young children experiencing, or at risk of, child poverty as costs increase and employment patterns change around the birth of a child. The project offers income maximisation advice and aims to prevent families from falling into child poverty by working with health and early years services to identify families at risk at an early stage.

The service has helped families with **539** matters this year, with client financial gain of **£531,783** an increase of £114,464 on 21/22. Of these **181** fell within the **Child Poverty Priority Groups**, with lone parents being the largest group receiving advice and those with children under 1 a close second. The service is now collecting postcode information for the Priority Groups which will allow us to better plan services.

HWC data is reported into NHSGGC Financial Inequalities Group, the NHSGGC Child Poverty Group and as part of HSCP Strategic Planning.

6.4. School Support Service

Our current School Support service offers advice to parents and carers via all schools and Early Learning Centres. This year **271** clients were assisted with advice with associated financial gain of **£189,525**.

6.5. Improving the Cancer Journey

Our Improving the Cancer Journey and Long-Term Conditions services help people to get the support they need - whether that's physical, emotional, practical, medical or financial. The services are a partnership between Macmillan Cancer Support, Renfrewshire Council, and NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde. The Improving the Cancer Journey service has continued to offer holistic advice for those with a cancer diagnosis. With money worries highlighted as the main issue for service users, in the last year, **£1,739,106** has been gained for **611** clients. In addition, a service for those with Long Term Conditions commenced this year, with **304** service users gaining **£382,703**.

Although these services are universal, many parents have gained from them and both bring much needed income and other support into households affected by illness.

6.6. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde – Advice in Hospitals

Although the Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH) in Paisley is attended by patients from the West of Scotland, it sees most of those in need of hospital care from Renfrewshire. The Support and Information Service aims to be the first port of call for all non-clinical health & social care enquiries. The information Hub in the RAH provides information about money and benefits, income maximisation support and help with energy bills as well as information and support for carers and patients. It also provides a food supply on discharge for those who need it, in partnership with Renfrewshire Foodbank.

Late in 2021/22, their Health Improvement Lead with responsibility for the service, joined Renfrewshire's Advice Partnership.

In the Royal Hospital for Children, which supports Renfrewshire families, the Money Advice service continues to support parents, carers and families. It provides an embedded and co-located Money and Debt advice with advocacy service to ensure that families access all benefits and entitlements and supports with debt issues, budgeting, energy costs, housing or eviction issues, employment, grants, white goods and applies a whole family holistic approach. **11** families from Renfrewshire were supported in 2022/23. The Maternity Matters service also supported a small number of Renfrewshire families during 2022/23.

6.7. Tackling food and fuel insecurity

- **Pantries** – Following the initial £75,000 funding allocated to three local partner organisations to establish or develop community pantries, we worked with Renfrewshire HSCP to bid for funding from Public Health Scotland to support families using the six existing Renfrewshire pantries. This brought an additional £3,800 to support families with free food and slow cookers. The pantries have continued to be bases for holistic support for families.
- **Community Food Fund** – In 2021/22, £25,000 of funding was allocated to provide small awards to organisations to develop community food offerings which move from emergency response to promote dignified, localised, access to food and community resilience. After initial awards were made, in 2022/23 the fund was topped up to £50,000 and awards were made to seven community organisations to alleviate some of the pressures of food insecurity in their areas.
- **Fair Food Renfrewshire** - In addition to support for local food provision, Renfrewshire Council is committed to exploring new ways of working together with local partners to develop a healthier, fairer and more sustainable food system locally. Looking forward, the Council are in the process of establishing a food partnership and developing a food strategy and action plan for Renfrewshire, encompassing the statutory requirements of the Good Food Nation Act 2022. The food partnership will bring together key stakeholders from right across the local food system from the local authority, HSCP, Health Board, third sector and community groups, and public sector establishments to food growers and processors, retailers and the hospitality sector. Building upon an initial stakeholder session in October 2022, we will start to develop a vision for Fair Food Renfrewshire and identify key priorities to shape this work during 23/24. The scope is wide and will cover economic development, catering and procurement, climate and environment concerns, health improvements, and social and economic wellbeing
- **Fuel Insecurity Pilot** – Following on from last year's initial investment of £50,000 into a fuel insecurity pilot to work with low-income households struggling to meet immediate fuel costs, a further £50,000 was allocated in 22/23 to continue the project. This project linked the provision of energy advice from Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau Energy Advisors to the provision of fuel vouchers for both pre-payment and credit meters to provide emergency assistance to families through two other partners, Linstone Housing Association and Renfrewshire Foodbank Foodbank. The project in 22/23 provided 294 pre-payment vouchers of £49 each (£14,406 in total), through Renfrewshire Foodbank. 157 credit meter vouchers worth £15,000 were distributed by Linstone Housing Association, who also used £3,300 to reduce fuel debt for 14 clients and spent £3,000 on draught proofing measures for 12 clients. This financial support was backed by energy advice and 213 clients have been supported with advice from Renfrewshire CAB with a total of £37,452.35 in

client financial gain reported. A further £20,000 has been agreed for the coming year to continue the advice aspect of the project for a further 6 months, while the other two organisations continue to provide financial support using their remaining funding.

- **Energy Management Unit** - Our Energy Management Unit comprises a team of three who provide advice to anyone struggling with energy costs and advocate for clients with energy companies. The advisers can also access available funds to support clients reduce bills/access emergency fuel. Overall, client financial gain for this service in 22/23 was £314,651 through supporting 1079 clients.
- **Information sessions** – Through our advice services, we know that through the year energy bills have been the issue most families reported being concerned with. To assist practitioners working with low-income families, as well as Council staff information sessions have been held during the year. The Council also input, along with Renfrewshire HSCP, to Engage

6.8. NHSGGC Health Visiting and Special Needs in Pregnancy Service (SNIPs)

There has been a detailed pilot and review in NHSGGC for those accessing SNIPs and receiving Money Matters supports in the Glasgow area. This service is a Specialist Maternity Service that supports people who are pregnant with drug/alcohol misuse, domestic violence issues, who may be a teenage pregnancy and those with mental health issues. The learning from this will be rolled out across Renfrewshire for all families accessing SNIPs support.

The updated Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan covering the period of 2022-26 (24 March 2022) highlights that the Health Visiting Universal Pathway promoting support to families with money worries. This reinforces that section of the pathway and plans for NHSGGC refreshing this process are being reviewed by the NHSGGC Financial Inequalities Group.

6.9. Pregnancy, Maternity and Early Years Staff Resource

The Pregnancy, Maternity and Early Years Staff Resource is a collection of resources offering support for staff engaging with families around the cost of living. The resource was developed during 22/23 by the Renfrewshire HSCP Health Improvement Team, in partnership with Engage.

This resource has been developed to support staff and provide them with up-to-date information on a variety of different resources offering support that they can share when engaging with the

families that they work with. This resource includes information on eligibility, what the family would receive and what the referral or application process would be.

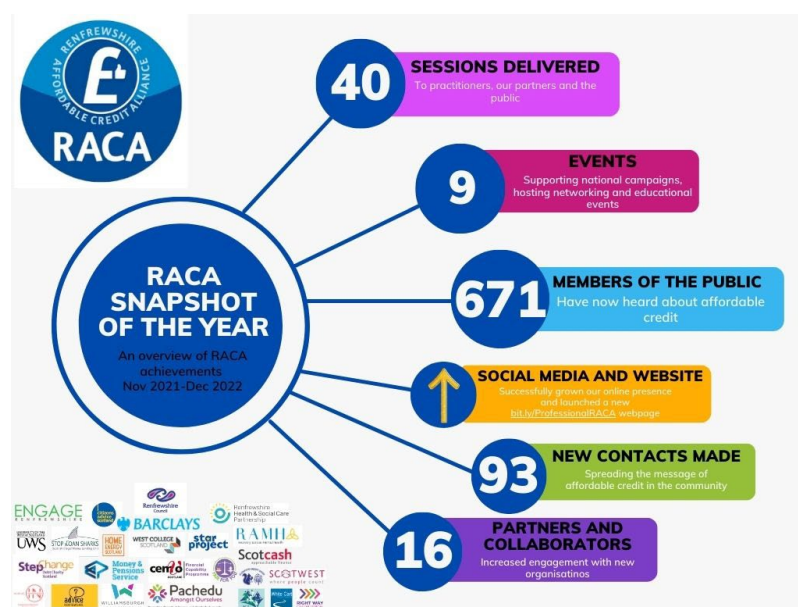
This resource can be assessed online with shortened PDF versions of each of the five categories of the resource are also available for staff to use and was launched in May 2023.

6.10. Affordable Credit

Using initial Council funding of £45,000, Engage Renfrewshire, our Third Sector Interface led an affordable credit initiative under the existing banner of Renfrewshire Affordable Credit Alliance (RACA – www.RACA.org.uk). This funding allowed the employment of an Affordable Credit Officer (ACO) from October 2021 who has been jointly managed by Engage Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire Council. The ACO was employed to work within Renfrewshire communities covering two priority areas; promotion of affordable credit options in Renfrewshire, and the prevention/reduction of people using illegal money lenders. In 2022/23, further funding was secured from Trading Standards Scotland which has allowed extension of this post to December 2024.

The ACO's focus will be on the Child Poverty Priority Groups as well as people living with mental health and addiction issues, social housing tenants and low income households. Sessions have been carried out within local communities including with local ethnically diverse communities and lone parent groups and the ACO has also arranged for support for local credit unions to break down barriers in reaching ethnic minority families and individuals.

In addition, the ACO supports practitioners, presenting to Council staff, third sector organisations and others such as further and higher education establishments.



The ACO works closely with lenders such as local Credit Unions, Fair For You and Scotcash as well as our local Citizens Advice Bureau to help ensure affordable credit in Renfrewshire is promoted and accessible and that individuals and practitioners can recognise illegal money lenders.

Looking forward to the year ahead, the ACO will continue to work with organisations targeting Child Poverty Priority groups, such as Home-Start, Barnardos and Pachedu and continue to build connections in Renfrewshire communities.

6.11. Digital

For specific groups of people there remain real barriers to access which exacerbate existing inequalities. Digital exclusion can broadly be considered in terms of connectivity, access to a device, skills and positive and accessible online experiences.

Renfrewshire has a strong reputation nationally in relation to the partnership approach to tackling digital exclusion and has carried this through 2022/23. Our Citizen Voice and Digi Ren groups continue to work in partnership across the Public, Third and Private sector for Digital Equity to minimise the number of people digitally excluded and to maximise the opportunity for everyone to have equal access to the benefits and opportunities of digital.

One of the focusses for 2022/23, which will be carried over to 2023/24 is the development of Digi Zones. This project will see locations across Renfrewshire branded as Digi Zones offering one of three levels of digital support, free WiFi and charging, free devices to use or free digital support, such as how to get online.

With £10,000 budget allocated from Fairer Renfrewshire funding, the group has also been examining the development of a device refurbishment and distribution project, with refurbished devices to be targeted at larger families, where children need to share devices. This will be taken forward in 2023/24.

The Council will continue to develop a Digital Champions network in partnership with OneRen and £80,000 has been allocated to this project from the £100,000 allocated to tackle digital exclusion. This will be an initiative with SCVO and Mhor Collective and will build a network of volunteers and staff, and capacity across local third and community organisations, so that more local people can be supported to access and use digital technology. This will allow us to begin to understand how place-based solutions to digital inclusion could work and to develop a model of best practice for use across Scotland. The Digital Champion has been recruited and started in post in May 23, so

initial reporting will take place from this project in December 2023. Initial steps for the Coordinator will be developing a training plan and volunteer recruitment.

The Council recognises that too few people are aware of the 'Social Tariffs' available to them. These are cheaper broadband and phone packages for people claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits. The Council's Digital Participation Officer has been working through DigiRen, Digital Citizens and other fora including the Advice Partnership to spread the word about these tariffs to those who may be eligible.

The Council has started an 18-month rollout of WiFi technologies to improve free public access WiFi across all Council and OneRen buildings. In addition, City Fibre are investing in a 700km network providing Renfrewshire residents and businesses with access to the fastest, most reliable gigabit speed connectivity. The Fibre to the Home (FTTH) component is complete which means access to full fibre broadband has increased from 5.3% to 70%, covering the three main towns in Renfrewshire, Paisley, Renfrew and Johnstone and we are working with Commsworld on how they can expand the network to increase the level of coverage.

6.12. Winter Connections

As part of Renfrewshire Council's wider response to the cost-of-living crisis, between November 2022 and March 2023, £70,000 of funding was allocated from the Fairer Renfrewshire programme to support the delivery of a Winter Connections programme. The programme was delivered in partnership with local organisations and aimed to encourage people to connect and participate in activities in warm and welcoming spaces across communities in Renfrewshire.

Local community and voluntary organisations could apply for small grants of up to £2,000 to support with the additional costs of making venues, activities and sessions open as part of the programme. Items eligible for funding included equipment, food, energy costs, and rent.

Funded activities needed to fit the criteria of Winter Connections and be:

- 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

38 projects were funded across Renfrewshire. A further £10,000 was allocated to One Ren to provide a programme of activities across Renfrewshire's libraries, focussing particularly on areas

where there was no Winter Connections activity proposed. Activities included family craft sessions, board games and community jigsaw-building sessions, film shows and family play sessions.

Winter Connections branded materials, including posters and stickers as well as leaflets with advice on where to find support with financial worries were also distributed to organisations participating in the programme along with free period products.

To support individuals and families with financial issues, advice sessions provided by Advice Works were arranged at some of the Winter Connections venues.

A wide range of activities were provided as part of the programme, some of which were tailored to the age of those attending. Some projects were targeted specifically at older people or younger people, but many aimed to be intergenerational and to attract families. Activities included:

- Creative activities, such as crochet classes, flower arranging, knitting, arts and crafts, and sewing workshops for young people
- Fun activities for all ages, such as bingo, board games, quizzes, Jam Jar movies, and a family friendly community woodland tour
- Educational activities, such as digital skills and cookery demonstrations
- Activities for younger children, such as Bookbug and lunch sessions
- Activities for teenagers, including a Youth Club with recreational sports, socialising, video games and a chill out venue

Evaluation has shown the programme has been well received and has had a positive impact, with encouraging feedback from the groups involved.

Many adults who attend our groups were not eating breakfast or lunch before attending. The programme ensured they did have hot food while they were with us, this encouraged some of the families to come along at times when they might otherwise have not ventured out in the winter.

Home-Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde

6.13. Cash-first approaches to supporting families

Locally, we continue to administer both the Scottish Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). While these supports are ‘business-as-usual’, since the beginning of the pandemic they have been topped up by both local and national funding to meet demand. In 2022/23 DHP was topped up by **£300,000** and Scottish Welfare Fund by **£500,000**.

We have also administered cash payments of £2.25 per day, per child for free school meals for the periods of times children have been on school holidays. The payment is made at a flat rate regardless of age.

Financial Insecurity Winter Payment

It was announced in late 2021 that £848,000 additional funding would be allocated to the Council from Scottish Government, to support people experiencing financial insecurity over the immediate winter period. From this, Renfrewshire Council allocated £230,000 to provide individual grants of £100 per household for people facing financial insecurity/hardship.

The £100 payment was administered by our Advice Works team, who provided feedback as to how beneficial families had found this one-off payment. During the cost-of-living crisis, it has helped with immediate costs, such as fuel and food. Advice Works were also able to offer each individual who was eligible for a payment income maximisation advice.

Recognising the benefits of these payments, the initial £230,000 was topped up, the amount increased to £150 from October 2022 and the payment expanded to allow households to receive two payments.

Recipients have been identified by referral only. This has allowed us to target communities who may not normally come forward for support, well as Child Poverty Priority Groups. We reached out to Barnardos to refer eligible young parents as well as Home-Start and local groups working with ethnically diverse families, such as Inspiring Families Development Network. The Health Visiting Teams also identified clients for the payments, referring in 204 clients in total, many of whom were in the Child Poverty Priority groups. To the end of March 2023, 4724 payments had been made. Of these 2522 were to families with clients in Child Poverty Priority groups.

Winter Clothing Payment

Last year, a further £325,000 of the Scottish Government winter funding was allocated to provide a £50 payment per child for winter clothing for children in receipt of School Clothing Grant. This was well received and it was decided that the payment should be repeated this year, with £295,000 allocated to these payments from Council funding in September 2022 and paid in October 2022. This payment will be repeated in Winter 2023.

6.14. Period Poverty

As well as our general provision of sanitary products in libraries, leisure centres and town halls, we have focussed on provision to community groups who work with families with young children, especially those with young children such as Home-Start and have also provided products to Early Learning Centres in areas of high deprivation, for mothers and other carers and family members to pick up what they need.

We have also worked with a number of our pantries and Renfrewshire Foodbank to provide reusable products to establish if those types of products work well for people with lower incomes.

In addition, period products were supplied to all 38 of our Winter Connections venues, and many of these have now signed up to keep a supply for their service users or the wider public.

All Renfrewshire schools offer products, as do Youth Services groups and we have continued to offer an online ordering service for those who have difficulty accessing products from community venues.

6.15. National Entitlement Card and Free Bus Travel

Approximately 79% of those young people eligible in Renfrewshire have a Junior or a Young Scot National Entitlement card and free bus travel as part of the U22s Free Bus Travel Scheme saving families money on transport costs.

Barriers to accessing the card have been removed by setting up easy application processes with trusted verifier organisations who support young people who are more likely to experience poverty including social work, Home Link, young homeless charities, supported residential units, those in employability programmes, and young migrants and refugees. We have removed the need for them to collect documentation and pay for a passport photo in order to apply for their card.

In general, where possible, we have removed the cost burden of applying for proof anyone in school. Instead of families having to pay for required proofs to apply, (e.g. full birth certificate extracts), we will use their school record instead to verify their details, simplifying and poverty proofing the process.

Young Scot cardholders can access discounts with their card including 15% off BE Uniforms which provide school uniforms, money off popular retailers such as Foot Locker as well as discounts in Co-op and food outlets.

Youth Services, who support sign up for the NEC and free bus travel, have run local youth information promotions to help young people access information that may assist them if they need help. One of the most popular has been the [Cost Crisis](#) campaign produced by Young Scot. All young people who engage with our service are guided towards the campaigns available on the Young Scot website in order to find information when they need it.

The Young Scot National Entitlement card can be used as part proof for opening a bank account with some banks, is accepted by Renfrewshire Council's Housing service for tenancy agreement proofs and will be an accepted form of proof for voting under the new legal requirement.

6.16. Housing

In early 2022, the Council and its partners were asked to support the establishment of a Welcome Hub at Glasgow Airport with a key aim of supporting people who arrived in Scotland through the Scottish Government's super sponsor scheme for **Ukrainian Displaced Persons** (UDP). The Council's existing Refugee Resettlement Team was strengthened and operates to meet the demands for advice, assistance and support from those staying in temporary accommodation, and, to date, the Welcome Hub has supported over 1,000 Ukrainian Displaced Persons UDP. The Housing Services have been instrumental in providing settled accommodation to UDP's and, to date, a total of 96 social rented properties have been provided to Ukrainian households in Renfrewshire.

A draft **Housing Asset Management Strategy** has been developed and is being reviewed to allow the new Scottish Government's EESH2 standard to be reflected in the Strategy. It will tie in with the Local Housing Strategy and the Local Development Plan, to help ensure Housing assets are contributing to the Council's wider aims. Fuel poverty and climate change legislation will play a primary role in the revised strategy, resulting in identifying additional investment towards energy efficiency and the decarbonisation of housing heating and hot water.

Renfrewshire Council was awarded up to £1,657,500 for qualifying projects under the Scottish Government's Energy Efficient Scotland Area Based Schemes (EES: ABS) programme for 2022/23. This includes over £1.1M for the **Renfrewshire Council Mixed Tenure Blocks External Wall Insulation** project which will support lower energy bills and help reduce fuel poverty.

We delivered year 4 of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, using a housing first approach and reducing the use of temporary furnished accommodation to permanent housing with appropriate wrap around support. The number of individuals being supported via the Housing First approach, is 43 at any one time.

2022 saw the launch of the new holistic support service ‘MYLA’ (My Life Ahead) - The project is now fully operational, and supports any household in Renfrewshire, regardless of tenure, whose life is being affected by alcohol/drugs, and build on the concept that in order to have good health, you need to have a good, settled home.

A new **Tenant Participation Strategy** has been developed to allow us to better engage with our tenants. As well as supporting existing tenant participation mechanisms, the new strategy will review how we can best support tenant participation, including embracing digital technology, to help us reach groups who have not been previously involved.

A new “**More Homes**” officer is now in place, and they will help bring private properties across Renfrewshire, which are currently unoccupied, back in to use.

Housing Led Regeneration and Renewal Programme

Renfrewshire Council’s Housing Led Regeneration and Renewal Programme will deliver modern, high quality, energy efficient, affordable Council housing that will not only significantly enhance the Council’s housing stock but will also contribute to the wider transformation of Renfrewshire as a place and will be central to the economic and social recovery of Renfrewshire.

This ambitious programme will be taken forward as a key Council priority, designed to deliver maximum benefits for local communities, with the active involvement of services across the Council. Phase 1 of the £100m, ten-year Programme covers eight areas which have been identified as being in particular need of investment and which contain a total of 1,648 properties; 1,147 of which are in Council ownership.

Neighbourhood Renewal Plans are being developed involving Council Services and community representatives in each of the eight Regeneration Areas which will operate in parallel with the physical regeneration plans. These will be tailored to the needs and circumstances of each area, going beyond housing and the immediate external environment and taking account of broader issues such as links to health and wellbeing, access to outdoor space and sustainable travel and employment or training opportunities to maximise the benefits achievable for local residents. There will be ongoing engagement with residents.

The programme will see a mix of investment to improve existing buildings and the common areas around them, with potential demolition and new-build in some areas, improving the wider neighbourhoods as places to live. A package of enhanced improvement works will be developed and fabric works will be tailored to the buildings in each area and will adopt a whole house retrofit approach with measures to improve energy efficiency and help reduce energy costs for tenants and residents.

It is anticipated that, along with refurbishment of existing properties, around 400 new affordable social rent houses will be built.

Private Rented Sector Advocacy and Enforcement

Recognising the challenges which residents living in the private rented sector may be faced with as Renfrewshire transitioned into the period of Covid recovery and beyond, £200,000 was allocated to fund resources to improve access to support, housing options advice and advocacy for tenants, and where appropriate to support the use of enforcement powers in the private rented sector.

Three new temporary posts were established within Homeless Services, the Housing Support team and Environmental Health- Enforcement, with close links being established across the three services to create an integrated support approach for tenants in the private rented sector.

The three posts have forged close partnerships which has resulted in a number of success stories through tenants being supported to address, amongst other matters:

- issues with landlords in relation to their tenancy conditions;
- preventing homelessness;
- accessing rent deposit guarantee schemes;
- managing finances and dealing with benefits claims;
- the physical condition of their rental property;
- enforcement action against landlords, including unregistered landlords; and,
- general counselling and advice.

The posts have been in place since January 2022 and to date 131 service users have received help and support via the 3 new posts. The initiative has signposted service users to a broad range of other agencies as appropriate, including Adult Services, the Community Mental Health Team, Advice Works, Womens Aid and Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau, and there have been several cases where tenants have been helped to access social rented or private sector tenancies, whilst others have been helped to remain in their current private let property following the advice and support provided by the officers concerned.

Feedback on this support has been extremely positive from tenants and similarly, several landlords and agents having had contact with all three areas of the initiative have expressed their positive support for the initiative.

A full evaluation including feedback from service users will be carried out later in 2023 and the current funding allocated to the project will allow the temporary posts to continue until January 2024.

Rent Collection

Our approach to rent collection ensures that officers have continued to proactively contact tenants where there has been missed rent payments or changes to rent payment patterns to offer advice on accessing benefits and other support services as appropriate. It is planned to increase the advice provision in 2023/24 to support more tenants, especially in light of the Cost of Living Crisis.

7. Theme 3: Supporting the next generation to thrive

7.1. Tackling Poverty

Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty programme supports a number of projects which help our young people thrive and help break down some of the barriers to attainment.

The programme:

- Augments **Cost of the School Day** funding by £75,000 a year
- Provides funding for **Breakfast Clubs** in some of our most deprived areas relieving financial pressure on low-income families, but most importantly, makes sure that children start the school day ready to learn.
- Funds the **Peer Health** project in partnership with Active Communities, working with young people in secondary schools across Renfrewshire to identify key health priorities in their school and developing young people to lead their own activities to improve health and wellbeing, with a focus on mental health.
- Supports **Street Stuff** out of school activities during the holidays and at weekends, along with the provision of free healthy meals.
- Ensures the **Skoobmobile** continues to provide a children's mobile public library service, including play sessions directly to children and families in communities, including Ukrainian families.
- Supports the **Families First** approach which continues to offer early years and family support services, including parenting support. It is anticipated the Families First model will continue to be

adapted to align to the Scottish Government's Whole Family Wellbeing policy agenda. Dedicated income maximisation and welfare rights advice for families will continue to be provided as part of a new wider family advice service.

Breakfast Clubs are part of a number of schools, some of which are funded through the Tackling Poverty Programme and others through other means or organised by individual schools. In Tackling Poverty funded breakfast clubs only, almost 40,000 free breakfasts were provided in 22/23, a marked increase on 21/22.

Breakfast Clubs support parents with their working schedules and with the family budget. Breakfast Clubs have also been found to have an impact on children's learning, with teaching practitioners recognising impacts, such as children being ready to learn and improved concentration and focus in those attending breakfast clubs.

Street Stuff provide free multi-sport, gaming and Youth Club activities for children aged 8 – 16 across Renfrewshire in the evenings and at weekends. Street Stuff buses have free Wi-Fi to ensure young people aren't digitally excluded.

To support the Cost of Living Crisis and as part of the Winter Connections programme, Street Stuff introduced a healthy meal as part of their evening activities with almost 4,000 meals provided between December 2022 – date. They also provide/support school holiday programmes for ages 5 – 14 which includes the provision of a healthy meal.

Funding provided by Scottish Government and Renfrewshire Council created an energetic Summer of Fun in 2022. A range of multi-sport, arts and crafts, drumming, dance etc. activities were delivered throughout the summer holidays including the provision of a healthy meal by Community Learning and Development and partners including Street Stuff with almost 1,000 young people benefiting.

Multi-sport and Gaming activities with the provision of a healthy meal were delivered during the October School Week with 538 recorded attendances.

Multi-sport and Gaming Activities during the festive period were again delivered in local communities with the provision of a healthy meal. Young people were also treated to a trip to the Irn Bru Carnival at the SECC with vouchers and prizes distributed for Flip out, Cinema and St Mirren FC games.

A multi-sport activity programme was delivered during the Spring Break over the 2 week period, again, with lunch provided.

Looking ahead and working with partners including the Fairer Renfrewshire lived experience panel we will review the criteria for holiday activities to ensure Child Poverty Priority Groups are better targeted.

Skoobmobile

The Skoobmobile provides a children's mobile public library service directly to children and families in communities. This service aims to help improve children's life chances by encouraging a lasting interest in reading, literacy, physical activity and learning. This year Skoobmobile has been involved in bringing play sessions to communities as part of our Winter Connections programme as well as supporting the return of the Early Years Local Learning Community for the first time since lockdown. Skoobmobile also visits primary schools storytimes, book borrowing, access to library digital resources and learning activities. Engagement took place with Riverbrae Primary, one of our ASN schools, gifting sensory books from Scottish Book Trust to families. This led to further engagements with the school and the development of a gentle appropriate sensory Bookbug for children with severe learning difficulties. Through their programme of community outreach, the team has supported Ukrainian families new to Renfrewshire and provided holiday activities.

The team note that the Cost of Living Crisis has squeezed household budgets, so access to free activities are welcomed now more than ever and numbers using the service are increasing. Skoobmobile reached 8,323 primary school pupils in 403 sessions, 1,353 pre-5 children and 250 adults were reached in 93 sessions. 6,391 books were borrowed and 1,637 children became members of Renfrewshire libraries. A further 2,829 children and 1,506 adults attended 149 outreach sessions.

Looking forward, Skoobmobile will support primary transition including in schools within areas of multiple deprivation and support the summer reading challenge through a programme of weekly stops throughout the summer holidays. In addition, after the success of the play sessions that were part of Winter Connections, Skoobmobile will develop this service in areas without a library, or where the library is too small to offer these types of activities.

Peer Health

The Tackling Poverty Programme funded Peer Health Project, in partnership with Active Communities, continues to work across Renfrewshire secondaries, including our ASN secondary school. In 2022, **200** Peer Educators were recruited and trained and workshops provided so teachers can support this work. Activities are decided within individual schools and based on their priorities. Examples of the work taking place are:

- Growing vegetables and healthy eating

- Peer educators delivering assemblies on bullying and boosting self care
- Homework Club
- Mental health bookclub/café
- Assemblies, PSE lessons and whole school events focussing on mental health

In addition, a number of out of school activities take place in the Active Communities base:

- A 'Hearty Lives' youth drop-in takes place once a week. These sessions have creative activities with health and wellbeing messages. Young people also have access to food, sanitary products and free condoms.
- A Youth Space takes place with the building is open to High School aged young people. Access is provided to hot drinks, toast, WiFi, Homework help and Health information.
- Games and Grub (part funded by Hearty Lives) for P5-P7s. Hot meal and pudding and active games for 15 pupils identified specifically by a local Primary School as families in need.

7.2. Scottish Attainment Challenge

As part of the refreshed approach to closing the poverty related attainment gap, the Scottish Government announced a Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) which includes the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) and Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Funding allocations have been confirmed until March 2026, allowing for long-term planning, however Renfrewshire's allocation will gradually reduce going forward. All local authorities set stretch aims in collaboration with schools as part of the refreshed SEF approach. These are key measures which clearly articulate overall aims for raising attainment and improving health and wellbeing, and for tackling the poverty-related attainment gap. Stretch aims will be monitored annually and used as part of improvement planning.

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated school closures significantly affected pupils living in the most deprived areas. Subsequent attainment data suggests that while there were decreases in attainment across all pupils, decreases were much larger for those living in the most deprived areas in Renfrewshire. Within the primary sector, attainment of pupils living in SIMD areas 1 to 2 (20% most deprived) decreased by 16 percentage points in literacy and 12 percentage points in numeracy between 2019 and 2021. This reversed a period of improvement in attainment for these pupils and resulted in a widening of the gap. Between 2016 and 2019, pupils living in 20% most deprived areas has increased attainment by 4 percentage points in literacy and 5 percentage points in numeracy.

However, data gathered within the 2022 Achievement of a CfE Level return shows a greater recovery for pupils in the most deprived areas than those living in the least deprived areas. Attainment in literacy in Renfrewshire increased by 9 percentage points and numeracy improved by 8 percentage points from the previous year. While attainment gaps remain larger than they were in 2019, these improvements resulted in the size of the gap reducing since 2021 by 2 percentage points in both literacy and numeracy.

Senior phase attainment has been affected by the cancellation of exam diets in 2020 and 2021 therefore comparisons over time are inconsistent. However, outcomes for school leavers in Renfrewshire have seen consistent improvement despite the impact of the pandemic. The gap in the percentage of school leavers entering positive destinations between 20% most and 20% least deprived pupils has continued to decrease, from 10 percentage points in 2018 to 5 percentage points in 2022.

As part of the SAC programme, we continue to deliver a range of approaches and interventions to address the poverty related attainment gap.

The focus for literacy has been on embedding the Renfrewshire Literacy Approach across schools with a view to sustaining the core strategies. This has included Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) in raising attainment in reading and writing for staff at all levels – leaders, teachers and support staff. A comprehensive programme of professional learning has been offered based on the Talk for Writing approach to specifically target teacher knowledge, skill and confidence in relation to teaching writing. Tailored CLPL and targeted support has been provided for individual schools and clusters.

Renfrewshire is still the first and only local authority in Scotland to provide a universal programme of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. We are the largest programme in Scotland and one of the largest in the UK. So far approximately **5,500** children aged 2-5 have benefitted from Imagination Library as a result of the council's investment in a universal programme. This is in addition to the long-standing programme for looked after and care experienced children. As of this month, **3,477** children are receiving books on a monthly basis and **2,083** children have previously benefitted but have now turned 5 and have graduated from the programme. 95% of parents/carers agreed that receiving books from Imagination Library motivates them to read more with their child and 99% of parents/carers agreed that sharing Imagination Library books has impacted positively on family life and relationships.

"Being dyslexic I hated reading, but I feel that the excitement my child has for her books has given me the confidence to push myself. Now we love reading together and I'm starting to enjoy reading as well as our time together." (Parent)

12 target schools, identified through a range of data, received weekly input from a numeracy Modelling and Coaching Officer. This involvement has positively impacted staff understanding of effective pedagogy, confidence levels, and engagement and achievement of children in numeracy and mathematics. Additionally, a varied universal professional learning program was offered to all practitioners, which was well-attended and highly evaluated across the authority. Bespoke training was also delivered to 20 primary schools, and 1 ASN school, with all participants agreeing that it was relevant, impactful, and increased their professional knowledge. A family games night pack designed to enhance numeracy skills and engagement through card and dice games has been piloted successfully in a few schools. The feedback from families has been extremely encouraging and plans are in place to share and promote this pack wider next session.

“It has been amazing to see the change in my class...children are now able to discuss, choose and explain their strategies.” (Teacher)

Childhood poverty and mental health are inextricably linked and addressing mental health and wellbeing remains a priority. As a result of our curricular programmes and staff training, we have seen improvements in health and wellbeing. Since last year, average wellbeing scores for secondary pupils have increased and the number of pupils who said they feel confident often or all of the time have increased. More young people are reporting that they’ve been feeling relaxed and feel loved. New curricular programmes, such as Renfrewshire’s Alcohol and Drug Awareness Education Resource, have been developed involving pupil voice and the wider Renfrewshire community including those with lived experience. The resource has been accessed across all of Scotland’s local authorities. Our focus on staff skills and knowledge has ensured that key staff in our schools are accessing training around mental health and wellbeing, specifically drugs and alcohol, self-harm, suicide, gender-based violence, internet safety, relationships and sleep. We are continually looking for ways to expand our peer education offer with over **500 MVP** (Mentors in Violence Prevention) senior pupil mentors trained this session across our schools. This session we piloted a new Mental Health Ambassador Peer Education Programme for Education Scotland in two of our secondary schools. We look forward to rolling this out further next session.

The **Cost of the School Day** (COSD) funding is available to schools to remove financial barriers to education. This has been topped up by the Tackling Poverty Programme by £75,000 per year, and this additional funding will continue in 2023/24. An evaluation of the COSD fund concluded that the volume of need has increased and that the needs of children and young people have changed as a result of the Cost of Living Crisis. The majority of schools have used their funding to ensure equity in school trips and uniforms. The fund continues to have a positive impact on attendance, self-esteem and sense of belonging.

“Supporting P7 residential trip has had a significant impact on wellbeing through providing children with opportunities to develop social skills and resilience through shared outdoor learning experiences” (Head Teacher)

Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) enables schools to improve the educational outcomes of children affected by poverty. We are exploring different collaborative planning approaches that could help schools maximise the impact of PEF going forward. New national guidance is expected imminently to help schools plan how they will most effectively invest PEF and monitor the impact.

In Renfrewshire, we are working together to get it right for children, families and communities. In doing so, we will continue to deliver high quality evidence based approaches and interventions which add value and supports establishments to address the poverty related attainment gap.

7.3. Ren10

Ren10, our multi-agency family service for mental health support, is playing a key part in helping those in need access the right level of support at the right time. Key activity has included the development of non-violent resistance approaches, inter-agency training and the creation of digital supports. The network/platform is open and accessible to all in need and helps bridge the gap between universal services that deal broadly with wellbeing and the specialist support for severe mental health conditions. During its first year, the service supported over 1,000 children and young people, including 125 who were care experienced.

Ren10 has helped connect teams and services across education, social work, health and the Third Sector which has meant the journey and outcome of those using Ren10 can be better understood. Through Ren10, we realised how beneficial it is for clients to have the services they need linked together to ease their journey. We will apply this learning to develop a new model of whole family wellbeing support, which will let families and those working with them access all the support they need in one place. Our localities focussed approach will provide seamless and holistic support wrapped around individual needs, with our resources aligned to increase our capacity around prevention and early intervention.

7.4. The Promise

We have entered year 3 of this 10-year programme of change with good evidence of progress in Renfrewshire to #KeepThePromise with significant developments underway and more planned. The delivery of The Promise in Renfrewshire requires a strongly committed multi-agency

partnership working approach and demonstration of a collective understanding, commitment, and activity in relation to The Promise across all the partners.

The roll out of Promise Keeper role has progressed significantly since its inception, and there are currently **118 trained Promise Keepers** across Renfrewshire, with ambitious plans to grow this network in 2023/24. A Promise Keeper can be a senior leader, middle manager, or member of frontline staff. Promise Keepers will be responsible for championing The Promise within their staff teams ensuring that their colleagues are aware of their responsibility to #KeepThePromise. They will also be central to ensuring The Promise remains at the forefront of service design and delivery. Promise Keeper values have been developed and recruitment to the role is ongoing.

Prior to December 2022 Renfrewshire has been successful in obtaining £200,000 of funding from the Corra Foundation to support three projects which will drive forward our Promise ambitions.

Project 1: The first grant of £50,000 enabled us to establish a Promise Ambassador whose role is to help Renfrewshire and its planning partners to make changes which reflect what is important to Care Experienced children, young people, and families. We have continued to fund this post internally on a temporary basis as we recognise its value in supporting our delivery of our Promise commitments.

Project 2: The grant of £50,000 was awarded to fund development of supports to parents whose children have been placed for adoption. The project aligns with the whole family support promoted by the Promise and aims to help children's future understanding of their birth family by encouraging and supporting parents to maintain indirect (or letterbox) contact with their children post-adoption. The funding will enable our adoption team to refine their approach and inform embedding of the service beyond the end of the funding period.

Project 3: Providing Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) and Lifelong Links for a small group of families, enabled by a £100,000 grant. The work is being delivered in partnership with Barnardo's. FGDM is being offered to parents within the pre and post birth social work team with the aim of reducing risk such that child protection measures are not required. In this approach, the extended family is supported to understand the risks and to develop their own solutions to overcome problems. The Lifelong Links work will focus on young people placed in out-of-authority residential setting for whom safe family placements cannot be identified. Interventions will be undertaken with their extended families and wider social networks to develop positive relationships to support them during their time in care and beyond.

Activity has begun on a Supportive School Structure - Right to Education Project. Renfrewshire has been successful in a funding application to the Corra Foundation for an investment of £150,000

over two years to support us to think differently and challenge ways of working around Supportive School Structure (Right to Education). This funding will allow us to conduct targeted work to highlight the need to ensure that all Care Experienced (CE) children and young people have a key person who is their advocate/supporter. This key person will ensure their attendance, participation and achievement are being supported and monitored effectively. This resource will provide focus tracking, and a genuine response to building positive relationships to ensure that school and life outside school is supported appropriately.

The Right to Education Programme focusses on ensuring the voices of our children who are in and around the edges of care shape policy and procedures to improve outcomes and future destinations. One of the aims of the Promise nationally is to reduce the exclusions of Care Experienced children and young people from school and this project will work to ensure that preventative and relationship-based approaches continue to be developed to work towards that aim.

A Promise Self-Evaluation Tool has been developed to assess progress and areas for development in key areas across different services in Renfrewshire. The self-evaluation tool will be circulated across all services in the local authority and to partner agencies. We are gathering examples of best practice to provide opportunities to learn from each other and celebrate the positive work and progress that is underway. It will also assist with the identification of gaps in provision and will allow services to plan how to make improvements to better deliver The Promise.

Embedded in the Promise is the use of language and the importance of care being a non-stigmatising experience. In 2022, Each and Every Child delivered a workshop to a wide range of staff from across the local authority. This session was very well received by all who attended and provided key information about tackling stigma around Care Experience. To ensure that the learning from the Each and Every Child framework is embedded locally, a Language Policy is currently being developed with rollout planned in early Spring 2023. This piece of work ensures that the words and phrases that we use to describe Care Experience are positive and do not further exacerbate existing stigma. Alternative words and phrases have been identified through consultation with Care Experienced people and staff from various areas of the local authority to ensure that this will be adopted in our work moving forward.

A programme funded by Renfrewshire Council and devised by Who Cares? Scotland called the Learning about Care Experience Schools Programme is being offered across Renfrewshire's education establishments (Early Learning Years to S6). The goal of the programme is to create more caring and inclusive school environments for Care Experienced pupils. The longer term aims of the programme are that:

- Care Experienced pupils stay in school longer and improve educational outcomes.
- An increased understanding of Care Experience is an integral part of school life
- A reduction of stigma and discrimination towards the Care Experienced.

There is clear evidence of progress happening across Renfrewshire Council and its partners. Given the partnership involved commitment, along with our wider accountability and collective activity approach we are well placed to increase the pace of, and the scale of change required to #KeepThePromise and to deliver better outcomes for our Care Experienced Children and Young People #KeepThePromise by 2030.

7.5. Community Learning and Development

Community Learning and Development reaches out to children, young people, adults and families, including those who face barriers and experience disadvantage, and takes a preventative and asset-building approach to working with people, families and communities.

The Renfrewshire Community Learning and Development (CLD) Strategy for 2021–24 was developed in collaboration with a wide range of partner organisations, third sector groups and individual service users across Renfrewshire. The CLD Strategy is aligned with the Renfrewshire Community Plan vision, supporting the agreed priorities and focus of the Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership and putting Renfrewshire communities and community wellbeing at the heart of shaping all of the work of community learning and development partners.

The strategy covers 4 main areas

Digital Inclusion – ensuring everyone has the opportunity to participate & benefit from digital technology

Universal Provision - ensuring no-one is left behind promoting and providing opportunities for all

Targeted Provision - targeting specialist resource & support towards those most vulnerable or with restricted capacity

Community Capacity/Connecting Communities - working with individuals, families and groups that have capacity to develop, deliver and maintain the services and facilities they want locally.

The Adult and Family Learning team continue to work actively in partnership with the Refugee Resettlement Team, Social Work's Unaccompanied Young Asylum-Seeking Children team and with English as an Additional Language (EAL) staff in schools. Adult and Family Learning have delivered

27 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) groups to people looking for support with learning English to participate more fully in their community.

For work with young people, this includes universal and targeted actions such as community-based youth work to build strength and capacity amongst young people. Youth services provide a bank of tablets during most of their sessions so that young people can use them to access online services, youth information, support homework and improve their digital skills. Approximately 120 young people have been able to access the devices across the year.

With the cost of living affecting so many families this year, Youth Services has developed a number of responses to support young people. Working with young people gives the service insight into their issues and priorities and ensures the responses are appropriate. This year they:

- Held a Clothes Fayre for young people aged 12-18 targeted at those experiencing poverty and around 20 young people made use of it. The fayre allowed young people to pick up items they liked and take them home for free while also helping the environment. This will be extended and repeated in 2023/24.
- Held a Love 2 Week inviting young people aged 12 - 18 to attend Love2Lead Love2Learn and Love2Care sessions. These sessions brought young people together and provided lunch and refreshments during the February holiday period. These sessions were targeted at care experienced or low income families and included distribution of free personal care kits that included a self-care activity guide and hygiene products
- Supported up to 100 Duke of Edinburgh Award places which are allocated usually by referral through partner agencies and schools to help identify the young people who would not normally be able to access or face significant barriers to access. Appropriate kit is also supplied free for schools and groups to help ensure pupils who would not normally be able to afford to participate and purchase kit can complete the award programme with their peers.
- Held Evolve groups for those aged 11-16 in local communities during school time and transport is provided where needed. Young people are referred (usually by their school) and usually fall within the attainment criteria and are more likely to be experiencing poverty. Participants learn key skills such as shopping on a budget and creative cooking on a budget and food is provided at all sessions. This year those targeted included Ukrainian refugees. Many participants also receive a free 3 month One Ren gym pass and kit to help them access leisure facilities when the cost would be prohibitive.
- Supported 80 young people in their targeted groups to receive trip places, free travel, and food to support participation and access to arts and cultural opportunities. These included care

experienced young people and Young Carers, our LGBT safe space group and Kinship Care group. The Arts and Cultural programme alleviates the barriers to participation caused by poverty by providing free travel, food, tickets and trip places to young people to support their participation and attendance at the cultural trips and experiences organised by Youth Services.

- Supported the Promise Champion Present Drive. Promise Champions group are care experienced young people who meet weekly to discuss topics around issues that affect care-experienced young people and their thoughts and views on support and care they have received whilst being care experienced. In the lead-up to the festive holidays, our Promise Champions held their Promise Present Drive, creating an Amazon wish list full of presents chosen by young people for other young people. 195 Amazon parcels were received and wrapped these into bundles to create 128 presents. All these were delivered to care-experienced young people across Renfrewshire supported by Youth Services, social workers and partner organisations that work to support care-experienced young people aged 11-24 years.

More information on Community Learning and Development plans and activities can be found in their [Strategy](#).

7.6. Thrive Under 5

“Thrive Under 5”, a programme funded through Scottish Government and delivered by Health Improvement staff from NHSGCC, is to be implemented in one or two Renfrewshire neighbourhoods during 2023/24. The purpose of the TU5 programme is to take a whole system, community food nurturing approach with families of pre-school children, combining action on food insecurity, healthy eating and physical activity the key programme elements include:

- access to healthy foods and cooking equipment
- income maximisation support
- building skills and confidence around food and cooking
- providing information and resources to encourage increased family physical activity

Those living in our poorest communities have poorer diets, are less physically active and more likely to be an unhealthy weight. Despite efforts, the inequality gap is not reducing and has actually widened in child healthy weight in recent years.

Whole system approaches are effective in tackling complex problems such as obesity, which is influenced by environmental, societal and individual factors and have the best chance to impact on diet and weight at population level.

7.7. Multiply

“Multiply” is a new programme in Scotland funded by the UK Government’s Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). It aims to help transform the lives of adults aged 19yrs + across the UK, by improving their functional numeracy skills. In Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire Council are managing the programme, which is overseen by Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership albeit its benefits are far wider than employment related.

In Renfrewshire, applications from those applying for funding have been decided by a panel which includes representation from the team working on child poverty to ensure parents in child priority groups are a key target group for funding as a way to support employability, but also to create with the wider aims of building parents’ confidence to help with their child’s homework as well as support with understanding bills and credit supporting better money management.

Renfrewshire residents including parents have access to a wide range of free learning activities on offer. Delivery started in January 2023 and by the end on March 2023, **11** pilot community-based numeracy/maths learning activities ran with **72** participants across the following areas:

West College Scotland - Make Numbers Count 18-week course for 2 hours per week to:

- increase your confidence using numbers
- improve your understanding of numbers
- obtain Numeracy and National 4/5 Maths SQA qualifications

Multiply in KLAS Care – Fun with Numbers - Learning through play is a great way of creating confidence. Simple games like cards, dominos, bingo and darts create a culture of learning. Free Creche provided.

RAMH (Recovery Across Mental Health) - Nutrition with Numbers - Five-week Nutrition with Numbers course – improving skills using numbers while learning about the benefits of a healthy and balanced diet.

VIAS (Values into Action Scotland) - Count Me In - A money management course specially designed for anyone with a learning disability or autism.

Adult and Family Learning Team - Courses to help build confidence with numbers by brushing up on the real-life maths we all use every day from helping with children's homework to getting to grips with weights, measures, and temperatures in the kitchen.

Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau - Figure It Out - increasing your confidence and tools to set realistic goals. Whether it's to manage household bills or make better financial decisions.

From April 2023 to March 2025 and additional 5 programmes will be on offer with scope to fund more local groups and organisations to offer activities.

Barnardo's - Getting Maths 2 Work - supporting individuals who face multiple and complex barriers.

Pachedu - Fun in numbers - supporting BAME service users and local parents with improving skills to help their children.

REEM - Providing learning activities aimed at engaging harder to reach learners, predominately women from ethnic minorities.

RACA - Interactive Money Management workshops to help people manage their money.

St Mirren FC - Winning with Numbers - supporting parents who want to be able to improve their numeracy skills and confidence.

The aim is by March 2025, that the Renfrewshire Multiply programme will have supported 145 courses and activities benefiting over 1,200 participants.



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