

To: Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee

On: 31 January 2024

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Fairer Renfrewshire Programme Update

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Council and partners have a key focus on tackling inequality and improving wellbeing and have longstanding programmes of work and partnership arrangements in place such as the Tackling Poverty Programme and the change programme established in response to the findings of the Renfrewshire Drug and Alcohol Commission.
- 1.2. Further to this, at Council on 2 March 2023 members reaffirmed their commitment to the Fairer Renfrewshire programme and outlined a number of investments including bringing together the current Fairer Renfrewshire funding alongside the Tackling Poverty and Social Renewal reserve funds into a single resource.
- 1.3. Work on priorities has continued with this paper containing updates on:
 - Winter Connections
 - Scottish Government Council Tax Debt Pilot Project
 - The Stronger Start project
 - School support service
 - Lived Experience Panel
 - Child poverty deep dive
 - Breakfast club provision

2. Recommendations

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

3. Background

- 3.1 As highlighted in Section 1, the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme brings together a number of existing programmes of work focussed on achieving fairness and equity, including the former Tackling Poverty Programme and Alcohol and Drugs Change Programme. These programmes are being brought together alongside the Council's Social Renewal Plan,

mapping a fairer future for Renfrewshire's residents through the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

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

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

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

4 Fairer Renfrewshire Programme Scottish Government Council Tax Debt Pilot Project

4.1 In November 2023, Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau (RCAB) approached the Council to collaborate in a Council Tax Debt Pilot. The Bureau had bid for the opportunity to participate in this Pilot, which is funded through the Scottish Government, as one of three areas in Scotland. The pilot focuses on exploring how local Citizens Advice Bureau and local authorities can work together to improve the journey of those who are in council tax arrears or struggling to make council tax payment. The aim is to provide better outcomes for people and for local authorities.

4.2.1 The pilot is informed by the best practice recommendations in the Collaborative Council Tax Collection Guide which was produced and distributed by the Improvement Service to local authorities in 2022 and runs from now until 31 March 2024.

4.3 The aims of the pilot are to test the best practice guidance in Collaborative Council Tax Collection to:

- Understand barriers and challenges to implementation.
- Work collaboratively to develop solutions.
- Improve people's experience of council tax payment and debt collection.
- Develop a "toolkit" that can be used in further funded activity.

4.4 The outcomes of the pilot will be provided through an evaluation report which will collate the learnings and achieved outcomes, whilst recognising the short time frames involved. Regular meetings will take place between relevant Council Officers and RCAB staff, with the initial meeting having taken place in mid-December.

Special Needs in Pregnancy service – Stronger Start

4.5 As previously reported to the Sub-Committee, Renfrewshire Council has been working with Renfrewshire HSCP, NHSGGC and Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau to develop a pilot for an advice and advocacy service within the Special Needs in Pregnancy service (SNIPs) at the Royal Alexandra Hospital after Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau were successful in an application to the National Lottery Improving Lives Fund, and have been awarded £95,000 to run a pilot of the service for one year.

- 4.6 Work has continued to commence this 'Stronger Start' service, with staff recruited and meetings with midwives taking place, referral processes confirmed as well as a location for the service within the hospital being agreed. Three newly appointed Stronger Start Staff started their posts on 17th January. These staff will receive a robust induction process, including NHS GG&C Mandatory Training.
- 4.7 The Improvement Service has agreed to carry out evaluation of the project, as if the project is shown as successful at addressing the needs of pregnant women with complex needs, further funding will be sought and having robust, external evaluation will help to make a case with potential funders.
- 4.8 A Steering Group formed from Renfrewshire Citizens Advice, Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire HSCP along with NHSGGC and Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire HSCPs continue to meet to support implementation and performance of this project which will offer income maximisation advice and also individual support and advocacy around a range of issues and will also develop robust referral pathways with partners in the public and third sectors.

School Support Service

- 4.9 The School Support service provided by Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau commenced on at the start of the school year, with the first appointments week commencing 23 August. From that date until the Christmas break there had been 87 contacts from parents, 62 appointments had been attended across schools, and there were a number of cancelled appointments and 'no shows'. This is despite automated reminder texts/emails being sent. The no shows are being examined to see if there are any patterns in those not attending or whether additional support can be offered.
- 4.10 The busiest areas for advice have been benefits Reasons for appointments have been varied, with advice and support provided around benefits, mainly Adult Disability Payments and Universal Credit. The second busiest area for advice has been housing, including homelessness.
- 4.11 Minimal Client Financial Gain (CFG) for clients has been recorded so far. This can be because of the timescales involved in processing benefit applications. It is expected more significant CFGs will be recorded as the project progresses. Feedback from schools has been excellent, with schools reporting that they and parents have found the service to be a valuable resource and that parents have felt supported by the adviser.
- 4.12 The Family Advice Service for younger children, provided by Advice Works, will commence early this year. After the work done with families claiming Free School Meals in 2023, the next stage is offering support to parents through referral from schools, including for those families with school meal debt.

Winter Connections

- 4.13 After the success of the Winter Connections programme in 2022/23, the new programme for winter 23/24 launched at the end of September. The fund comprises £75,000 from the Fairer Renfrewshire budget with a further £10,000 from the Recovery Change Programme to reduce stigma and to make sure activities are accessible to people in recovery from mental health issues or alcohol and drug use.

- 4.14 Like last year, organisations are able to bid for up to £2000 to provide activities which are:
- Open, free and easy to access
 - Inclusive, welcoming, respectful, and safe
 - Able or willing to provide connections to other services and supports
 - Able to offer warm drinks/snacks/food along with activities, where possible
- 4.15 A Panel comprising Renfrewshire Council, Renfrewshire HSCP and Engage Renfrewshire has been set up to scrutinise applications and make recommendations to the Head of Policy and Partnerships, who has been delegated authority to make decisions on funding to support speedy distribution of funds.
- 4.16 To the end of December, 43 applications for funding have been approved by the Head of Policy and Partnerships, with over £80,000 allocated to projects. Officers are continuing to work with community groups in areas with gaps to maximise use of funding, with the panel looking at range and time of activities as well as geographical split before making recommendations to ensure coverage is as wide as possible across Renfrewshire. A full list of applications is attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.17 At the Leadership Board on 6 December 2023, members also approved funding of £6,000 from Fairer Renfrewshire funding to OneRen Libraries to extend provision of a range of activities across all Renfrewshire libraries as last year, and in addition allow libraries to offer hot drinks and cup soups to all those attending the library as well as snacks at selected childrens' activities.

Lived Experience Panel

- 4.18 The Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee has been given a number of updates relating to work of the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel. Their last meeting of the year in December 2023 was used to look back at achievements over the first full year the panel has met and decide priorities for 2024.
- 4.19 The first meeting of the Panel in January 2024 will be used to examine and inform the School Meal Debt process and gain the Panel's insight on this and the associated proposed communications to parents.
- 4.20 As reported at the last Sub-Committee meeting, a sub-group of Renfrewshire's digital partnership, Citizens Voice, has been working to introduce the DigiZone initiative, DigiZones being locations within Renfrewshire where any member of the public can connect to the internet as a minimum, but may also be able to gain digital skills support and access devices. The February Panel meeting will be used to discuss this initiative and wider digital exclusion.
- 4.21 The Panel are keen to explore the issue of breakfast club provision and have highlighted this as priority at a recent session.

Child poverty – deep dive activity

- 4.22 Work has now commenced on a child poverty deep dive exercise at a Community Planning Partnership level, with the kick off discussion scheduled at its next meeting on 22 January. Partners will be asked to consider their current activity and intelligence on child poverty at a strategic level, and then to consider how we could work differently with the resources available going forward. A particular focus will be on considering how resources are and could be targeted to support families in the child poverty priority groups.

4.23 A partnership meeting is also being scheduled in February to commence a geographical or locality based deep dive exercise on child poverty in Gallowhill. Further updates on these exercises will be provided to the sub-committee at a future meeting.

5 Breakfast snack provision

5.1 At the Leadership Board on 6 December 2023, further information was requested by Councillor Ann Dowling on the breakfast snack pilots which have been operating more recently in Renfrewshire. It was agreed that information would be provided through a report to the Fairer Renfrewshire sub-committee.

5.2 Breakfast “club” type provision operates across primary establishments as follows:

- 9 Tackling Poverty funded breakfast clubs
- 11 School and Environment, Housing & Infrastructure run breakfast clubs
- 7 school only run clubs
- 10 Out of School Care clubs

5.3 Currently breakfast service is available to purchase within Secondary school establishments, with Magic Breakfast, a charity run service, providing funding directly to Johnstone High School and Trinity High School to provide a free option. These operate with no involvement by Soft FM.

5.4 In July 2023 a pilot was implemented across 4 primary school locations providing a fully compliant healthy snack option each day to **all** pupils.

- St Charles Primary school
- Williamsburgh Primary School
- Gallowhill Primary School and
- St Catherine’s Primary School

5.5 These schools were chosen to assess how it would work in practice (food cooked on-site/off-site) and if clubs already in place had an impact on the uptake of the snack.

5.6 Almost 1200 pupils are able to benefit from the healthy snack option each morning. Fruit is provided 3 days a week (apples/oranges/bananas) and snacks are cereal bars and popcorn-based snacks, which are all compliant with foods regulations. The snacks required to be chosen and issued appropriately to ensure they complied with allergen requirements.

5.7 Some evidence is emerging of positive outcomes with minimal returns of fruit and no returns of healthy school compliant snack and is continuing to be delivered within these 4 locations. This provision requires minimal staff resource as the snacks are collected at the kitchen by pupils and taken to each classroom prior to the morning break. However, it should be noted that with food costs having increased in recent years, the cost of the project requires to be evaluated in conjunction with outcomes achieved. Officers have started to engage with the schools to get feedback from the Head Teacher, staff and parents and carers to assess the success from their standpoint.

5.8 Work is also currently underway to discuss and explore how the initial findings from the pilot programme can inform future proposals relating to the development of breakfast provision in Renfrewshire.

6. Wider developments and next steps

- 6.1 Members are asked to note that work is underway to bring forward proposals for Fairer Renfrewshire programme funding to be allocated for 24/25. These relate to previously supported Tackling Poverty funded initiatives as well as new and emerging priorities.
- 6.2 A key aim during 2024 will be the continued development of the programme beyond the immediate cost of living crisis, with a particular focus on considering local activities and priorities in relation to New Scots and people with a disability. Proposals are being developed to fund and recruit an equalities development resource to support this programme of work, and it is also intended that the previous community impact survey undertaken at different points over the past 3 years, be repeated in the first half of 2024. This will ensure more detailed and current information is available to support the targeting of partnership activities through Fairer Renfrewshire.

Implications of the Report

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

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Appendix 1 – Winter Connections Grant Funding

Applications Approved under delegated authority by Head of Policy and Partnerships				
Organisation	Area	Funding Requested	Purpose	Funding proposed for approval
Active Communities Scotland Ltd	Johnstone	£2,000	Family Game and Grub -	£2,000
Erskine Arts	Erskine	£2,000	Soup Sessions	£2,000
Rays of Hope	Elderslie	£2,000	Rays of Hope Winter Project 2023	£2,000
Renfrew YMCA SCIO	Renfrew	£2,000	Connect and Chat	£2,000
RIG Arts	Paisley	£1,998.50	Creativity in Mind Seedhill	£1,998.50
Twist and Hit Cheerleaders	Paisley	£2,050	Winter Youth Club 2023-24	£2,000
Thorn Athletic Community Trust	Johnstone	£1,500	Wake Up, Warm Up	£1,500
Brick Lane Music Academy	Paisley	£2,000	Music Friendship Café	£2,000
Friends of Howwood Park	Howwood	£2,000	Village Winter Activities	£2,000
Just Dive In CIC	Paisley and Johnstone	£2,000	Aquatic Inclusivity for Winter Wellness	£2,000
Johnstone Castle Learning Centre	Johnstone	£2,000	Winter Connections	£2,000
Linwood Community Council	Linwood	£2,000	Winter Connections	£2,000
KLAS Care CIC	Linwood	£1,980	Winter Family Fun	£1,980
Renfrewshire Rainbow Buddies	Shortroods	£2,000	Smiles in Shortroods	£2,000
Brick Lane Music Academy	Gallowhill	£2,000	Gallowhill All Ages Community Choir -	£2,000
Home-Start Renfrewshire & Inverclyde	Paisley	£2,000	Winter Warmer with HSRI	£2,000
STAR Project	Paisley	£2,000	STAR Winter Connections	£2,000
ROAR Connections for Life Ltd	Johnstone	£2,000	Jam Jar Movies at Station Seven	£2,000
Friends of Barshaw Park	Paisley	£2,000	Barshaw Winter Community Activities	£2,000
Glasgow Community Circus	Paisley Ferguslie Park	£2,000	Winter Wellbeing Circus Project	£2,000
Our Place Our Families	Renfrew	£2,000	Café OPOF	£2,000
Linwood Baptist Church	Linwood	£2,000	Connections	£2,000
Renfrewshire Effort to Empower Minorities (REEM)	Paisley	£2,000	Winter Wellbeing Project	£2,000
The Thursday Club	Paisley Glenburn	£2,000	Winter Warmer Project -	£2,000
Paisley Methodist Church	Paisley	£2,000	The Saturday Get-Together	£2,000
St Mark's (Oldhall) Church of Scotland	Paisley	£2,000	Winter Connection Wednesday Welcome -	£2,000
Kilbarchan Improvement Project	Kilbarchan	£1,200	Winter Movies	£1,200
Howwood Community Council	Howwood	£2,000	Winter Warmer Programme	£2,000
Foxbar Elderly Forum		£2,000	Lunchtime Buddies	£2,000

Kickin' On		£2,000	Unit 23 Social Space	£2,000
Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust	Lochwinnoch	£2,000	Youth Drop In Sessions	£2,000
Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust	Lochwinnoch	£1,960	Men's Shed & Teenage Health & Wellbeing Workshops	£1,960
CREATE Paisley	Linwood	£1,580	CREATE Opportunities Youth Programme	£360
Mountain Ash Club	Paisley	£1,900	Blether & Brunch	£850
Sewing2gether All Nations	Paisley	£1,360	Winter Connections at Sewing2gether All Nations	£1,360
School of African Cultures	Paisley	£2,000	Sakana / Play	£2,000
St Vincent's Hospice Ltd	Howwood/Spateston	£1,730	St Vincent's Hospice Winter Connections	£1,730
Pachedu	Paisley	£2,000	WICE Winter Sewing to Connect	£2,000
Langbank Swingpark Regeneration	Langbank	£1,040	Soup & Sandwich at the Village Hall	£1,040
Loud n Proud	Paisley	£1,980	When Music Was Music	£1,980
Ralston Primary Out of School Care	Paisley	£1,585	Lego Spike!	£1,585
The Bungalow CIC	Paisley	£1,950	Movie Club	£1,950
Scottish Afro Caribbean Arts Association (SACAA)	Paisley	£2,040	Winter Unity	£2,000
Langbank Swingpark Regeneration	Langbank	£915	MUGA – Get Active!	£915
Inchinnan Development Trust	Inchinnan	£1,749	Nature Craft & Create	£1,749

Applications not recommended for approval

Organisation	Area	Name	Funding Requested	Decision
Finding Your Feet	Paisley	Physical Wellbeing Programme	£2,000	No funding award – application relates to existing project. Referred to other funding sources.
Street Connect	Paisley	Community Connections	£2,000	No funding award – does not meet criteria as application relates to staffing costs to recruit worker. Referred to other funding sources.
Shopmobility	Renfrewshire	Winter Warm Up Together	£2,000	No funding award - does not meet criteria as it relates to a series of five one-off events in different locations.
Kilinside Evangelical Church	Paisley	Community Connections	£1,860	No funding award - does not meet criteria as it does not provide a regular scheduled activity. Referred to other funding sources.
Return to Life SCIO		Keep Warm Without the Fear	£2,000	No funding award - does not meet criteria as it does not provide a hot snack/lunch or activities and is not located in Renfrewshire, or specifically for Renfrewshire residents. Referred to another funding source.
West End Community Centre	Paisley	West End Warm Hub	£2,000	

				No funding award – does not meet criteria as there is no specific additional free activity being offered. Referred to other funding sources.
The Welcoming Renfrewshire Family Group	Renfrew	The Welcoming	£2,000	No funding award – does not meet criteria as it is for a one-off event. Referred to other funding sources.
Afghan Families	Paisley	Afghan Families Gathering	£1,000	No funding award – does not meet criteria as the group is not constituted. Referred to Engage Renfrewshire to source alternative funding.
Calder United Free Church of Scotland	Lochwinnoch	Warm Space Refreshments and Blether	£750	No funding award – does not meet criteria as there is no specific activity offered and Lochwinnoch is already well served by Winter Connections projects.
Open Aye CIC	Lochwinnoch	Renfrewshire Winter Wellbeing of the Woods - RenWinWow	£2,000	No funding award – does not meet criteria as it is not open to everyone and costs versus delivery was expensive.
St Mirren FC Charitable Foundation	Paisley	Buddie Big Scran	£2,000	No funding award – programme was funded through an alternative source.