

To: Leadership Board

On: 19 June 2024

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Local Child Poverty Action Report

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 after the end of each reporting year. 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 2023 and March 2024, and also planned and proposed actions for the future.
- 1.3 The report highlights work being undertaken across Renfrewshire Council and its partners, statutory and third sector, to support families and respond to the ongoing cost of living crisis which has impacted many of our families, with the effects being felt particularly by low income families.
- 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.
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2 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- Note the content of the draft Child Poverty Local Action Report 2023/24.
 - Approves the Local Child Poverty Action Report for publication.
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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 The most recently published figures on child poverty show that in Renfrewshire the rate of child poverty after housing costs is 20.4%, an increase of 2.4% since 2019/20. This figure is slightly less than the Scottish average of 21.3%. The figure is not consistent across Wards, however, with Renfrew South and Gallowhill having the highest rate at 36.4% and Bishopton, Bridge of Weir and Langbank the lowest at 9%.

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, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde 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 child poverty as well as shorter term responses to the cost of living crisis, highlighting actions and achievements throughout 2023/24. 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. In 23/24 there has been a continued increase in the number of parents coming forward to use the service at 352 compared to 231 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. Over the last year, the number of residents claiming out of work benefits in Renfrewshire has reduced from 3635 to 3590, equating to 3.1% of the population. There has also been an increase in the number of accredited living wage employers in Renfrewshire to 92 from 85 in 22/23.
- Our Procurement Team has realised 219 Community Benefits this year, with an additional 118 of these are skills and training opportunities and 25 recruitment opportunities.

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

- Our Fairer Renfrewshire programme, continues to have a positive impact on low-income families in Renfrewshire in 23/24. In March 2023, £818,000 was allocated to the programme to continue a number of existing supports such as free school breakfasts in schools in areas with high levels of child poverty, additional resource to Street Stuff activities during the holidays and at

weekends, along with the provision of free healthy meal and funding for our mobile children's library, the Skoobmobile. The programme also supports new initiatives, including support for community food offerings which move from emergency response to promote dignified access to food and community resilience.

- 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, which provides advice to families with younger children through their Family Advice 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
 - Energy advice at RCAB through our Fuel Insecurity Pilot
 - A School Support service in every secondary school in Renfrewshire and in our ASN schools

Through working with RCAB and HSCP colleagues to develop a project to be based within Maternity at the Royal Alexandra Hospital, and provide advice and advocacy for mothers with complex needs, Lottery funding was received and a Stronger Start service set up in the latter part of 2023/24.

- In November 2023, we provided families with an additional £50 per child for children receiving School Clothing Grant to help with winter clothing. Funding has been allocated in the 2024/25 budget to repeat this payment for over 5,000 children.
- Our successful Winter Connections Programme saw £85,000 allocated from the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme to fund 46 activities across Renfrewshire and a further £6,000 allocated across all Renfrewshire's libraries, including our mobile library. Venues also provided hot drinks, snacks and food.
- Our Summer of Fun Programme was very well received, with Scottish Government and Council funding combined to provide a comprehensive free programme comprising holiday camps, funded activities in the third sector, activities in libraries and activities for families as well as a programme of arts based activities, supported with free food and drinks.
- Our Energy Advocates have saved clients almost £257,000 this year including ongoing savings, write offs and Warm Home Discounts.

- We topped up our Cost of the School Day funding by £75,000 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. Attainment of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas has increased at a greater rate than for pupils in the least deprived areas; by 4 percentage points in literacy and 6 percentage points in numeracy between 2020-21 and 2022-23.
- With the cost of living affecting so many families this year, Youth Services has developed a number of responses informed by and to support young people including a free drama group and a Climate Change Champions group growing their own food as well as supporting 48 young people who couldn't otherwise afford it to access the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.
- Work around The Promise has progressed well and there are currently 259 trained Promise Keepers across Renfrewshire, with ambitious plans to grow this network in 2023/24. Promise Keepers are 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.

5

Next steps

- 5.1 One of our priorities this year has been to listen to lived experience, and our Fairer Renfrewshire Panel has met a number of services in 2023/24, influencing policy and practice in areas such as holiday provision and school meal debt. In 24/25 we intend to continue to work with the Panel around communications and health and wellbeing and encourage more engagement between Council services, HSCP and the Panel to gain better insight and understanding of the needs of our low-income families.
- 5.2 In 23/24 we also started a new programme of work to focus on using data to help us understand what child poverty looks like in our communities and the particular drivers of child poverty in particular areas. One of the first areas of focus identified is Gallowhill due to the

sharp increase in child poverty there. Using quantitative and qualitative data we have started to build a picture of this area and with an HSCP funded Community Needs Assessment in 24/25 will begin to build capacity and empower the community to develop actions based on its own needs and wants.

- 5.3 Through new posts in our employability service, Invest in Renfrewshire, we will build engagement with more parents who could benefit from employability support and nurture effective partnerships.
- 5.4 By better connecting Council services, statutory partners and the third sector, we will continue to support families and work to reduce child poverty 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 2023/24



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1. Foreword

This, our sixth Local Child Poverty Action Report, sets out activities undertaken in Renfrewshire to reduce child poverty and support our children to thrive. It covers what we have done between April 2023 and March 2024, along with future plans to tackle child poverty.

We want Renfrewshire to be a fair place, where everyone has the best chance to live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives, to feel safe, supported and empowered to unlock the strength of our collective potential. We want a Renfrewshire where no child lives in poverty, and where children feel healthy, happy and valued no matter their background.

This has been another challenging year for families. Although inflation is coming down and energy prices have reduced slightly, the cost of living remains much higher than in recent years. The longevity of the cost of living crisis means that many families are struggling financially, and we recognise the impact of this is much greater for low-income households. Renfrewshire Council, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC), and Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) continue to work with Community Planning partners and the third sector to support our families living with the financial pressures on their households.

Despite the long term focus and investment into tackling child poverty, child poverty in Renfrewshire has been rising steadily for a number of years, with the most recent figures telling us that around one in five children in Renfrewshire are living in poverty. We know we can positively impact the lives of our families and support them into work and better paid jobs; help them to maximise their income; work with young people so they attain more at school; and support the mental health of families and children. This report shows the ways we do this across services and partners through working collaboratively. We also know that our actions alone cannot solve child poverty, and that collaborative effort is required at both a local and national level.

We continue to be ambitious for our families, and through listening to lived experience through community engagement and our Fairer Renfrewshire Panel we are working hard to ensure our services are truly person centred and that the eradication of child poverty is front and centre of all we do.

Alan Russell

Chief Executive, Renfrewshire Council

Name & Title to be included from NHSGGC

2. Executive Summary

This is Renfrewshire's sixth Local Child Poverty Action Report. The report captures the range of activity that has taken place in Renfrewshire to reduce child poverty in 2023/24 and looks forward to the actions planned for 24/25 and beyond. Although no longer referred to as a crisis, continued Cost of Living pressures have had a significant impact on Renfrewshire's families over the last year 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 2023/24

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 their journey towards and into employment. In 2023/24 we have continued to see an increase in the number of parents coming forward to use the services of Invest in Renfrewshire and the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) funded organisations with **352** new parents accessing the service and **73** parents re-engaging with the service.
- 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. Over the last year, the number of residents claiming out of work benefits in Renfrewshire has reduced from **3635** to **3590**, equating to 3.1% of the population. There has also been an increase in the number of accredited **living wage** employers in Renfrewshire to **92** from 85 in 22/23.

- Our Procurement Team has realised **219 Community Benefits** this year. 118 of these are skills and training opportunities and 25 recruitment.

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

- Our **Fairer Renfrewshire** programme, continued to have a positive impact on low-income families in Renfrewshire in 23/24. In March 2023, £818,000 was allocated to the programme to continue a number of existing supports such as free school breakfasts in schools in areas with high levels of child poverty, and funding for our mobile children’s library, the Skoobmobile. The programme also supports new initiatives, including support for community food offerings which move from emergency response to promote dignified access to food and community resilience.
- **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, which provides advice to families with younger children through their Family Advice 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
 - Energy advice at RCAB through our Fuel Insecurity Pilot
 - A School Support service in every secondary school in Renfrewshire and in our ASN schools

In addition, through a successful bid for Lottery funding, a **Stronger Start** service has been set up at the Royal Alexandra Hospital to provide advice and advocacy for mothers with complex needs. This project was developed in partnership with HSCP, NHSGGC and RCAB colleagues.

- In November 2023, 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 2024/25 budget to repeat this payment for over 5,000 children.
- Our successful **Winter Connections** Programme saw £85,000 allocated from the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme to fund 46 activities across Renfrewshire and a further £6,000 allocated across all Renfrewshire’s libraries, including our mobile library. Venues also provided hot drinks, snacks and food.

- Our **Summer of Fun** Programme was very well received, with Scottish Government and Council funding combined to provide a comprehensive free programme comprising holiday camps, funded activities in the third sector, activities in libraries and activities for families as well as a programme of arts based activities, supported with free food and drinks.
- Our **Energy Advocates** have saved clients almost £257,000 this year including ongoing savings, write offs and Warm Home Discounts.
- We topped up our **Cost of the School Day** funding by £75,000 through our Tackling Poverty Programme.

Approximately 86% 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. This is an increase from 79% last year, and is the highest in Scotland.

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. Data has been used to target approaches and develop interventions which support schools to raise attainment and address health and wellbeing needs. Attainment of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas has increased at a greater rate than for pupils in the least deprived areas; by 4 percentage points in literacy and 6 percentage points in numeracy between 2020-21 and 2022-23.

With the cost of living affecting so many families this year, Youth Services has developed a number of responses informed by, and to support, young people including a free drama group and a Climate Change Champions group growing their own food as well as supporting 48 young people who couldn't otherwise afford it to access the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Work around The Promise has progressed well and there are currently 259 trained Promise Keepers across Renfrewshire, with ambitious plans to grow this network in 2023/24. Promise Keepers are 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.

2.2. Priority Actions

For 2023/24, we developed a set of priority actions.

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

This report provides examples of where these priority actions have been progressed, including development of policy responses to child poverty and the continuing cost of living crisis through the Fairer Renfrewshire programme, which has now superseded our long running Tackling Poverty programme.

We have started using data to inform work specifically in the Gallowhill area of Paisley, which has seen child poverty rates rise sharply. Using quantitative and qualitative data, we have started to build a picture of this area, and with an HSCP funded Community Needs Assessment being conducted in 24/25, we will begin to build capacity and work alongside the community to develop actions based on its own needs and wants.

Our Fairer Renfrewshire Panel has been running for over a year, and in that time the Panel has fed into policy and practice around areas such as the summer holiday programme and school meal debt. The Panel also met with our employability service, Invest, and the feedback they provided

has been used by Invest to make a number of changes to their service, and how they communicate with the public.

Advice for families has extended in the last year. We now have advice embedded in all secondary and ASN schools through a pilot with Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau (RCAB). The Council's Advice Works service has piloted an initiative where all families applying for Free School Meals or Clothing Grants were offered advice. Both Advice Works and RCAB are involved in our new school meal debt processes, which is more support focussed, and both will receive referrals from schools for families who may be struggling with money.

Looking forward to 24/25

Collaborating across services and with partners is vital to provide the most comprehensive supports for families living with low incomes. In 24/25 we will continue to join up support and bring partners together, to focus collectively on achieving the most for our communities and families. Through our Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee, and using our Fairer Renfrewshire Officers Group and wider statutory and 3rd sector links, we will work across services to develop responses to increased costs of living and child poverty and maximise impact of services.

This cross-cutting way of working will help us in our focus on our areas of highest child poverty. In particular we will be exploring place-based approaches to tackling child poverty in Gallowhill, Paisley, in response to recent sharp rises in rates of child poverty.

Through increased resources in parental employability, we will go into our communities to engage those parents who are not working or who are working in low paid jobs to enhance their skills and career prospects and increase their income. Again working with partners, we will look at how we help sustain employment through offering support for those who have taken on a new job and may be struggling to budget and pay bills.

Again, with partnership across services at its core, we will develop a summer programme for children and young people, especially targeting those with low incomes or requiring additional support, and their families across Renfrewshire.

We will continue to fund and consult with our Fairer Renfrewshire Panel, working to expand the reach of the panel across Council Services and beyond – to the HSCP and third sector, and embed the voice of lived experience in our policy and practice. We will bring the Panel together with elected members as well as Council Officers.

Using improved data about our communities, we will better identify required resources and target services where they are needed most, while continuing to respond flexibly to emerging issues affecting families across the whole of Renfrewshire.

2.3. Scottish Government Child Poverty Targets and Drivers

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**

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

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 is below 60 per cent of the inflation adjusted UK median income in the same year. This is a measure of whether those in the lowest income households are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole.

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. This is a measure of whether those in the lowest income households are seeing their incomes rise in real terms.

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.

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 and focusses on three 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

These combined with the three drivers of child poverty give a focus to the work taking place in Renfrewshire to poverty within our families.



2.4. 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

Lone Parents



Disabled



3+ Children



Minority Ethnic



Youngest Child Aged <1



Mothers Aged <25



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.

2.5. Child Poverty in Renfrewshire

In March 2024, the Department for Work and Pensions released new statistics on children in low-income families. The proportion of children in low-income families in Renfrewshire has been steadily rising since 2014/15 (discounting data for 2020/21 which has significant caveats, due to the coronavirus pandemic).

For 22/23, the percentage of children in relative low income, before housing costs in Renfrewshire is **20.4%**, representing **6,068 children**. This is an increase of 108 children compared to the previous year, when the rate was 20.1%. The rate for Scotland is 21.3%. In contrast to last year, not all wards in Renfrewshire saw rises in the proportion of children in low-income families, with half of our wards (six) seeing a reduction in rate. 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 33.5% and 36.4% respectively and although the rate in Renfrew South and Gallowhill ward has reduced by 0.1%, this ward has seen the sharpest increase in rates since 2020.

Ward	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change in % since 19/20
Renfrew South and Gallowhill	16.1%	18.7%	20.1%	23.2%	24.9%	30.1%	26.8%	36.7%	36.4%	6.3%
Paisley Northwest	19.8%	20.5%	23.9%	26.9%	28.8%	29.5%	22.9%	31.2%	33.5%	4.0%
Paisley East and Central	14.0%	13.2%	17.6%	18.5%	18.5%	18.9%	15.9%	21.3%	21.7%	2.8%
Paisley Southwest	12.7%	12.0%	14.2%	16.8%	19.8%	19.4%	16.0%	22.7%	21.6%	2.2%
Johnstone South and Elderslie	12.7%	13.4%	17.6%	20.7%	18.1%	19.0%	14.5%	20.7%	21.6%	2.6%
Scotland	14.0%	14.5%	16.2%	18.0%	17.9%	18.9%	16.0%	20.8%	21.3%	2.4%
Renfrewshire	11.8%	12.3%	14.2%	16.6%	16.8%	18.0%	14.8%	20.1%	20.4%	2.4%
Johnstone North, Kilbarchan, Howwood and Lochwinnoch	9.5%	10.0%	10.6%	14.0%	14.3%	15.9%	13.3%	17.9%	19.2%	3.3%
Renfrew North and Braehead	12.4%	13.4%	13.5%	18.5%	18.6%	18.5%	15.0%	19.4%	19.0%	0.5%
Paisley Northeast and Ralston	10.6%	12.7%	14.2%	16.9%	15.2%	17.4%	13.6%	17.5%	18.2%	0.8%
Paisley Southeast	7.7%	8.2%	9.8%	10.7%	11.6%	15.4%	13.1%	16.5%	16.4%	1.0%
Houston, Crosslee and Linwood	10.4%	10.2%	10.9%	12.9%	12.6%	13.1%	10.1%	13.5%	13.2%	0.1%
Erskine and Inchinnan	7.9%	7.5%	9.6%	9.9%	9.6%	11.0%	10.4%	13.3%	12.7%	1.7%
Bishopton, Bridge of Weir and Langbank	7.0%	6.0%	6.5%	7.8%	7.1%	7.5%	5.6%	7.5%	9.0%	1.5%

In 23/24 we have been working to better understand the reasons behind these sharp rises in certain Wards as part of our 'Deep Dive' into data, and ensure we are targeting the right supports in the right areas.

3. Strategic Context

3.1. Fairer Renfrewshire Programme

The Fairer Renfrewshire Programme is a large, partnership programme of work across Renfrewshire, seeking to tackle the inequalities that exist across Renfrewshire's communities. There are four key themes which are shared across all elements of the Fairer Renfrewshire programme, and these are:



The Council's Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee has been meeting since August 2022. This Sub-Committee considers matters relating to poverty and financial insecurity, including food and fuel insecurity and the continuing high Costs of Living affecting our families. 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 Officers Group, chaired by the Head of Policy and Partnerships, meets monthly. This Group brings together Officers from across the Council as well as Renfrewshire HSCP and OneRen, Renfrewshire's charitable trust which provides culture, leisure and sporting opportunities. This allows cross service information sharing and scrutiny on matters related to

making Renfrewshire fairer, and promotes a cross cutting approach intended to increase impact on outcomes for our households who are living in poverty.

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. One of the key pillars of the plan is **'Fair – nurturing bright, happy and healthy futures for all'**, which outlines a number of key corporate priorities focussed around addressing child poverty. The Plan also describes a cross-cutting theme – **improving outcomes for children and families**, with all of our strategic outcomes directly contributing to this outcome and demonstrating that services are working together to get it right for children, families and communities.

In tandem with the Council Plan, a refresh of our 10 year Community Plan took place last year, with our [Annual Report](#) detailing the work being undertaken on the areas of focus identified in the refresh. Our actions with regard to supporting low income families reflect the themes of Best Start, Bright Futures and are informed by our 2022 evaluation of the projects within the Council's Tackling Poverty programme. There are three 'Areas of Focus' within the Community Plan, of which **'Supporting low-income families'** is one, with 4 action areas dedicated to this areas of focus.

With an emphasis on joining up support for families within communities, and taken in tandem with the Council Plan, this Community Plan illustrates our commitment, along with our partners, to reducing child poverty and supporting our children to have the best start in life.

3.2. Renfrewshire's Health and Social Care Partnership

Renfrewshire HSCP IJB 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.

This report has a strong input from the HSCP Health Improvement Team who focus on prevention and early intervention and have been working closely with Council Colleagues in a number of areas.

3.3. 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](#) has been developed to cover the period 2023 – 2026. It sets out our focus for Renfrewshire’s children, young people and families and identifies the steps we will take to improve their lives.

The Partnership examined national and community priorities and how these link in with our vision children’s service planning. This includes work around The Promise, UNCRC, 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 Children’s Services Partnership Oversight and Monitoring Group continues to meet on a bi-monthly basis and provides updates to each meeting of the Partnership Board.

3.4. Using data – Gallowhill

As the child poverty figures for Renfrewshire show, the Gallowhill area of Paisley has seen a sharp rise in child poverty since 2021. Using quantitative and qualitative data we have started to build a picture of the area and the issues driving the increase. HSCP data has highlighted a number of health indicators which have changed and other data has highlighted that Gallowhill has a high

density of lone parents, households with a disabled adult or child and larger families (3 or more children). Anecdotally, it appears that ethnicity and migration may also be an important factor.

Working in close partnership, HSCP Health Improvement and the Council have commenced work focussed on exploring and planning a place-based, partnership response to challenges around rapidly growing child poverty in the Gallowhill area.

A partnership session, bringing together services from across the Council and key partners such as the HSCP, One Ren, and Engage Renfrewshire, was facilitated in Gallowhill to begin to understand what we know about the area, what we can do together, and what comes next.

In tandem with this initial work, the Health Improvement team secured £20,000 of funding to carry out a grassroots Community Needs Assessment to identify needs and wants of the local community and subsequent community activity. This is intended to understand resilience challenges, community aspirations and assets as well as identification of a way forward for utilising these to foster positive changes. Supported by a steering group made up of partners from the HSCP, Council, NHSGGC and third sector, the funding has been used to commission a local organisation to carry out the assessment and develop an action plan.

At the end of the engagement and needs assessment, all partners including Renfrewshire Council, Education, Community Planning Partners, Engage, local current service providers, Community Learning and Development, OneRen, Police, NHSGGC Public Health and Health Improvement as well most importantly, local community members from Gallowhill will be brought together to consider the results of the needs assessment and identify next steps required to create the infrastructure to respond to local needs.

While this work is taking place, a number of services have started, or will start to come into Gallowhill to support with some of the finding of the data deep dive or the partnership session. This includes employability outreach, support with digital exclusion from our Digital Champions and OneRen providing free activity sessions for families and the Skoobmobile commencing regular outreach in the area.

3.5. How we work with people

Fairer Renfrewshire Panel

In 2022/23, we established a Fairer Renfrewshire Panel of people with lived experience of poverty to inform Council policy and practice. Working with Poverty Alliance as an expert national partner, and STAR Project as our expert local partner, we ran a 6 month 'test of change' to establish whether

a Panel would result in meaningful engagement on the part of both people with lived experience and policy makers. The decision was made to extend the arrangement for another year and the Panel has continued to meet throughout 2023/24, now supported solely by STAR Project.

The Panel has provided insight in a number of areas. The initial discussion was around holiday provision in Renfrewshire, with the Panel contributing to the plans for our 'Summer of Fun', providing feedback on what is useful for low income families, eg, provision of food in all settings, provision for siblings, local provision so there are no transport costs and provision for older teenagers.

The Panel has also fed into the Council's new School Meal Debt processes, which now include earlier referral to available supports. They have met the Digital Strategy Delivery Manager to discuss digital exclusion and have provided feedback and ideas to our Climate Emergency Lead Officer around Renfrewshire's Net Zero Delivery Plan.

Discussions with the panel around employability, especially parental employability have been used to inform events, and target work, for example, on producing information for those with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Renfrewshire is also one of the three areas in Scotland where the Citizens Advice Bureau has been funded to work collaboratively with the Council on a Council Tax Debt Pilot. The pilot focuses on exploring how local Citizens Advice Bureaux and local authorities can work together to improve the journey of those who are in council tax arrears or struggling to make council tax payments. The aim is to provide better outcomes for people and for local authorities. The panel were consulted with to help those engaged in the Pilot to understand barriers to accessing support, such as advice and review correspondence associated with collection of Council Tax as well as potential for enhancing collection processes in general.

The Panel has met with the Convenor and Depute of the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee and we also intend to bring the Panel together with the full Sub-Committee and Fairer Renfrewshire Officers Group to discuss Panel priorities and their future plans.

These 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.

Youth Services

Our Youth Services team have also carried out consultation and outreach in under-represented areas to develop youth voice in the community. Their Summer Youth Voice Roadshow planned and

delivered in partnership with Renfrewshire Youth Voice, MSYP's and members of Youth Voice groups engaged young people across Renfrewshire over 4 weeks of summer 2023.

A Renfrewshire wide youth survey was carried out to assist with youth engagement in the community post-Covid and to record their ideas and views about the areas they live, go to school and work in. As well as an online survey, focus group discussions were held to find out more about what they liked and disliked about their area and the issues they felt affected them and what they would welcome as youth provision in their community.

The groundwork established through the Youth Voice Programme has been fed back to the Renfrewshire Youth Work Network, with the plan to continue to develop the mapping of youth voice locally, offer training and the partnership working to develop the Local Youth Action Plans that can be produced collaboratively and with young people, linking youth voice in schools and into the wider Community.

4. 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.

4.1. Local Employability Partnership

Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership (RLEP) is the local strategic employability partnership consisting of partner agencies from the Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership. 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.

Over the last year, the number of residents claiming out of work benefits in Renfrewshire has reduced from 3635 to **3590**, equating to **3.1%** of the population, equalling the Scottish rate. Data shows us that:

- The rate is higher for males than females, although the gap has decreased since March 2023 (3.9% compared to 2.3% for females).
- The proportion of young people (18-21) on the claimant count remains higher than for any other age group at 4.7% (355 people) with the 50+ group having the lowest rate of 2%.
- Our disability employment rate is lower than Scotland (44.8% against 52%) The UK disability employment rate is 53.9%. The disability employment gap rate (difference between the non-disability employment rate and the disability employment rate) for Renfrewshire is 36.8% compared to 30.7% for Scotland.
- Our economically inactive group has shown a significant decrease in the number of people registering a long-term health issue now at 8,700, compared with 12,800 last year.
- Our employment rate for ethnic minority residents at 60.9% is less than for white residents, at 75.1%. This contrasts to the Scotland rate of 64% (white 74.9%).

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. This includes Care Experienced young people which are prioritised by RLEP in its services and programme delivery.

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.

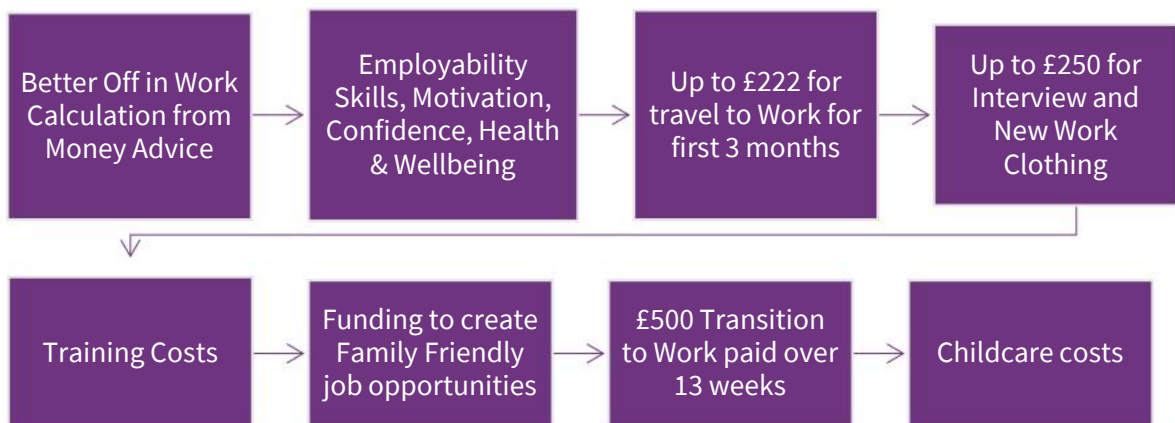
Renfrewshire LEP has established a number of sub-groups focussing on priority groups and all of these will consider employability related actions to tackle child poverty. The Health Conditions and Recovery sub-group, chaired by HSCP Health Improvement, works to support people in Renfrewshire with health conditions to improve their employability. A key piece of work progressed by this sub-group in 2023/24 was the development and implementation of a pathway for Community Link Workers (CLWs) to refer into employability services, using Invest Renfrewshire as

the single point of contact for ease. Although the pathway was developed with a focus on referring individuals with health conditions, it has also been used by CLWs to refer parents into Invest's Parental Employment Support team.

During 2024/25, the subgroup aimed to develop and launch an "Asking the Employability Question" toolkit for staff working in health and social care settings. The toolkit purpose will be to increase staff confidence of speaking about employability with the individuals they work with and increase knowledge of referral routes.

4.2. Parental Employment Support

Renfrewshire's parents who meet at least one of the priority groups and who are unemployed or low income employed can access practical and financial support including:



Support provided to parents is person centred and tailored to meet their individual requirements, aiming to remove the barriers they are facing to progress towards employment or gain improved employment.

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.
- Specialist support for parents with other significant challenges such as having a criminal conviction.
- Targeted support to tackle the increased challenge of in-work poverty by helping parents already in work to remain active in the workplace and gain progression through a rewarding career, through the provision of ongoing training and employability support.

- Confidential income and money advice which includes: benefit checks and help with any claim processes; better off in work calculations; help with debts; creation of a bespoke budget for the family; and budgeting skills support to ensure long lasting effect.
- Employment Recruitment Incentives aligned to parents, 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.
- A Wellbeing Advisor to support parents who are requiring additional support.
- Traineeship opportunities as paid placements within various sections of the Local Authority, where parents can re-enter the job market as a trainee initially to develop their skills and confidence to support them to progress towards gaining employment.
- Anxiety Management courses and other support with mental health.

In the financial year 2023/24 there was a significant increase in the funding awarded to Renfrewshire to support parents through the Child Poverty Funding stream (formerly known as PESF – Parental Employability Support Fund). This funding enabled additional services to provide a focused and tailored support for families both employed and unemployed.

Invest in Renfrewshire recruited a Child Poverty Co-ordinator in the summer of 2023 to focus on managing the delivery of the Parental Employability Support Team and developing and enhancing the employability support for families in Renfrewshire.

Throughout the year, the Parental Employability Team have delivered **outreach** in locations across Renfrewshire. This approach has allowed parents to access support in their local area as well as from Invest in Renfrewshire’s main office at The Russell Institute in Paisley town centre. Outreach has been delivered in five community settings and the team have also participated in outreach activities in schools and early education establishments and will continue to engage with more education establishments in 2024/25. This outreach has been extended through working in partnership with the Skoobmobile team. Using this, (Renfrewshire’s mobile library service for children), the team has been able to get to locations not previously served to engage with parents accessing the Skoobmobile service and aims to continue to work with this service going forward.

To support the engagement with parents who are unemployed, the team deliver group information sessions in each of the Jobcentre Plus offices across Renfrewshire. These sessions enable residents engaging with the Jobcentres to meet with Advisors and hear about the services in the different

teams within Invest in an informal setting and they also have an opportunity to speak to the Advisor about their personal support requirements before being referred on to the service.

Through information gathered during assessment and ongoing work with service users, Invest and the LEP sub-groups recognised that additional support was required to support people to improve their **mental health** as part of their journey into employment. The LEP and Invest in Renfrewshire commissioned counselling support from local providers and those who need to can access both counselling sessions and where required specialist support. This will continue to be delivered during 2024/25.

In addition, training was provided for Invest and LEP staff to improve their skills and knowledge in supporting those at any stage of their employability journey with their mental health. This included training in Scottish Mental Health First Aid and Small Change Big Impact – Trauma Informed practices. There will be further opportunities staff to attend these training opportunities in 2024/25 and there will be an additional offer of training on understanding neurodiversity as we look to remove barriers especially for those who may struggle to gain employment..

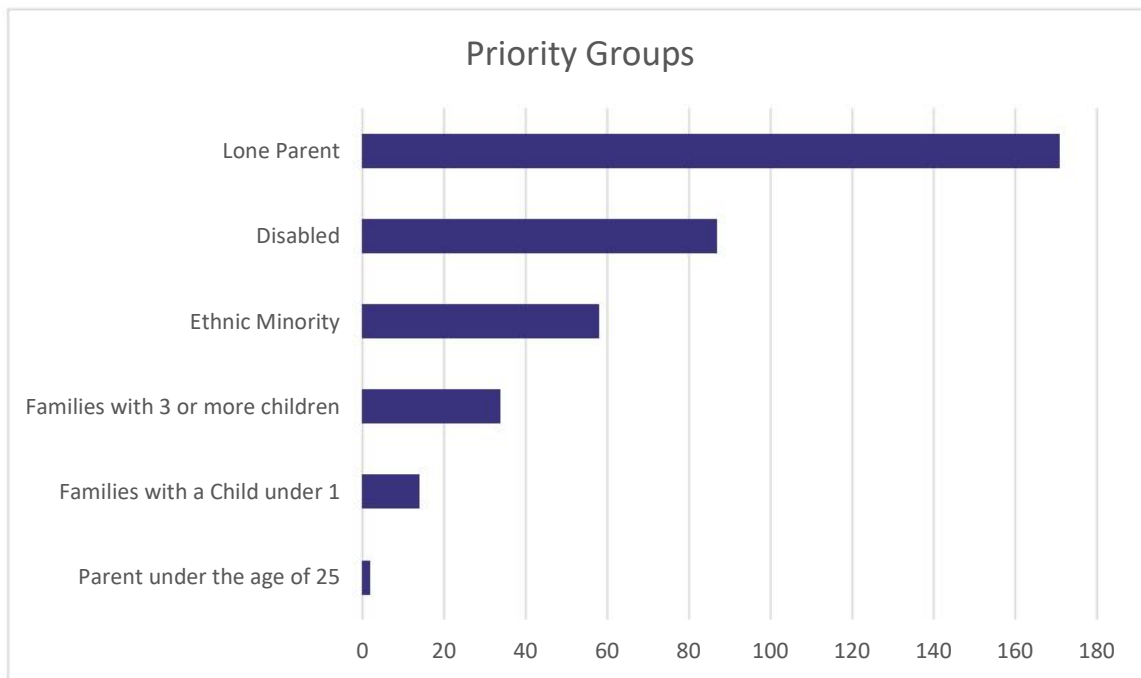
The Invest and LEP funded providers offer a range of **barrier removal, prevocational and vocational training** opportunities and participants take part in a range of activities. Group activities cover a wide range of topics including interview skills, team working etc, as well as formal accredited training such as care, first aid, driver training and other sector specific training which enhance and develop the attributes, skills and knowledge required to support progression into sustainable employment. Parents can also access self led Digital College courses that they can work at at home to fit their childcare responsibilities.

As well as numerous general and tailored training opportunities, for those who are not working, specific LEP commissioned support for parents for 2023/24 was delivered by:

- Enable's 'Progress for Parents' service which was designed specifically for parents who are disabled and/or have disabled children to support 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
- West College Scotland 'YES Programme' a personalised learning programme to support parents with multiple barriers into employment
- BDA Ltd provided support to people interested in progressing into self-employment

In 2023/24 we have continued to see an increase in the number of parents coming forward to use the services with Invest and the LEP partners registering **352** new parents to access the services and **73** parents re-engaging with the services in comparison to 231 last year and 92 in the previous year.

A number of the parents accessing our services also met one or more of the Child Poverty priority groups, the table below shows the priority groups that the parents engaged meet.



We recognise the many challenges and barriers parents face when considering returning to work including English as a second language, money and debt issues, health related conditions including mental health, criminal convictions and housing issues. Personal action plans are agreed with all parents to support them at all points of their employability journey to negate these challenges.

In 2023/24 there were **132** parents who progressed into employment/self-employment. Funded Work Placements were commenced by **7** parents, with **5** of these parents progressing into employment. Traineeship opportunities were funded for **39** parents within the Local Authority where they were able to gain valuable work experience within various sections of the Local Authority, the roles were created to be family friendly and provide flexible working for parents with a view to them developing skills to progress into other employment within the Local Authority or other organisations. There were **9** parents who entered Further Education and **163** who gained a qualification.

The Job Brokerage team engaged with employers to encourage flexible working options when considering recruiting parents, employers were offered funding through the Parental Employer Recruitment Incentive to create an opportunity for a parent.

The Transition to Work welfare fund was accessed by **105** parents in the year to support them financially in making this transition into employment parents were able to access up to £1000 paid over a period of 3 months. In addition to this funding they were able to receive support with

clothing for interviews and for commencing employment and funding towards travel costs for the initial 3 months of employment.

Learning from Lived Experience - Employability

The Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel were invited to meet the manager of the Invest in Renfrewshire service and the PESF Employability Coordinator at a session including an overview of the services available to those considering employment and a tour of The Russell Institute, where Invest is based. Through this meeting and the follow up meetings they provided Invest with recommendations to improve the support offered. Members of the Panel also 'mystery shopped' the service and provided feedback on the experience.

The feedback from the panel has enabled the Invest team to see the service through the eyes of a potential service user and following this some changes have been implemented as detailed below:

- Improved Social Media content to show photographs of staff and meet the team, locations of outreach and more success stories
- Staff received training in trauma informed practices to enhance their skills and knowledge and this will continue to be offered in 2024/25
- The service has Improved awareness of Invest and the LEP services with other organisations was delivered by inviting local organisations not working within employability to the annual employability conference to hear about the offer available to residents. This included a number of third sector organisations, HSCP, NHSGGC, Housing and other Council services
- Partners were invited to a consultation event to build a partner toolkit to support non-employability staff to start the conversations around employability support.
- Improved community outreach and increased in-person support for residents has been a focus of the teams to encourage more people to access our services and for the services to be more visible.
- Building reconfiguration in The Russell Institute to make it more user friendly has commenced with new meeting booths, additional training and meeting spaces, this will be in place in May 2024. The Fairer Renfrewshire panel will be invited back to The Russell Institute following these changes being implemented.

4.3. Looking forward to 2024/25

Looking to next year, Invest will increase staff numbers, bringing the team to full capacity enabling them to engage with more parents throughout Renfrewshire and further develop relationships with local organisations delivering services supporting families.

Invest also plans to continue to expand the outreach services over the period of 2024/25 to offer services from other venues to support more parents in the different locations across Renfrewshire. The service aims to engage with more third sector groups and organisations and other partners 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 continue to work closely with organisations that already have good relationships with parents, in particular those working with the child poverty target groups.

Outreach is planned for Gallowhill Community Centre to commence in April 2024 with an aim of engaging with parents from this area. This location has been selected due to the sharp increase in child poverty rates within the area as previously noted. The team will work in partnership with other organisations to meet the needs of parents engaging in the services with the first of these being the Digital Inclusion service who will provide Digital Champions support for parents accessing the service. The plan is to utilise the centre to meet parents one-to-one, deliver group sessions and to provide a drop in for parents.

Parents can access all LEP commissioned provision, however, through the LEP commissioning for 2024/25, three organisations have been commissioned to provide pilot projects and specific support to unemployed and underemployed parents. This includes a specific project for minority ethnic parents to build confidence and assist them to take the first steps to engaging with employability services.

The commissioned services will work in partnership with Invest in Renfrewshire's Parental Employability Support team, Invest will provide the wrap around support for parents participating; they will work in partnership to recruit parents for each of the programmes and will provide ongoing support during and after the programmes to support with progression to next steps on their employability journey.

4.4. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Employment Programmes

Key highlights from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde include a continued focus on apprenticeships, including ongoing recruitment of Modern Apprentices as well as establishing formal arrangements for Graduate Apprenticeship programmes. In the year ahead, there are plans to adapt the Modern Apprentices recruitment timeline to increase uptake of young people, as well as ensuring that staff are provided with internal upskilling opportunities that may aide career progression and utilise graduate apprenticeships as recruitment tool.

NHSGGC has continued to drive forward the NHS Scotland Academy Programme, which is a partnership between NHS Golden Jubilee and NHS Education for Scotland offering accelerated training for a wide range of health and social care roles and professions. This programme has enabled appropriate partners to connect to career pathways and support workforce supply requirements for Health Care Support Worker entry level posts.

NHSGGC has continued to deliver careers programmes and events in partnership with internal stakeholders and education partners linked to workforce supply forecasts and priority areas. NHSGGC have worked with DWP partners in Glasgow and Clyde to promote clinical and non-clinical careers and vacancies.

NHSGGC has supported the expansion of the MCR Pathway mentoring scheme for young people, which is a national, award-winning mentoring programme that supports young people to find, grow and use their talents.

In the next year, the NHSGGC Recruitment and Attraction Plan will provide framework for outreach and careers activity and governance will be provided through the Workforce Planning Steering Group to ensure activity is aligned to our future workforce needs. The priorities for Workforce Equalities Group and Staff Health Strategy Group priorities will continue to focus on supporting all aspects of staff health and wellbeing in work.

4.5. Supporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers

During 2023/24 we continued to receive referrals for people who were arriving in Renfrewshire through resettlement schemes from Syrian and Ukrainian nationals. There were 57 refugees who accessed our service in total. Of this, 30 were Ukrainian refugees and 2 Syrian refugees. In addition to the Parental Employability Advisors, Ukrainian parents have access to a Ukrainian speaking

Advisor who can support them with translation and provide support throughout their journey into employment.

4.6. Procurement

In Renfrewshire we are committed to maximising Community Benefits through Council 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 Wealth Building is a key priority and Community Benefits are evaluated as part of the tendering process and monitored on a quarterly basis. The Council's Procurement Team has realised 219 Community Benefits this year. 118 of these are skills and training opportunities and 25 recruitment.

NHSGGC has also worked this year to promote the new NHS Scotland Community Benefits Gateway (CBG), to all NHSGGC's Third Sector Interfaces, including promotional materials and presentations at network meetings. The CBG is a free and easy to use online service that connects NHS Scotland suppliers with third sector community organisations within Scotland who are looking for assistance with community initiatives. In collaboration with Public Health Scotland, the CBG helps improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of local areas and assists in the reduction of health inequalities across Scotland.

The development of a new Procurement Development Programme for 2024-25 has been a key focus for NHSGGC, with the year ahead looking to focus on the development of new and existing suppliers, enabling supported businesses and third sector organisations to better access opportunities in the NHSGGC supply chain and increase understanding between suppliers and third sector organisations to realise the opportunities provided by the CBG.

NHSGGC is also an affiliate member of the Supplier Development Programme and ensures procurement attendance at local and national "Meet the Buyer" events where appropriate.

4.7. Childcare

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. We have also been focussing on childcare within our holiday provision, trying to ensure this supports parents who need childcare while they work.

The childminding workforce has declined in recent years during the expansion of early learning centres, and shortages of childminders are being reported with a decline of 41% in Renfrewshire since 2016. The Council, through RLEP, has funded a programme by the Scottish Childminding Association to recruit and train childminders in Renfrewshire to help raise the number of approved childminders.

Renfrewshire Council continues to support third sector organisations through the distribution of funding for the delivery of services for families with young children. £90,425 was allocated for 23/24, in a range of grants supporting daycare and out of school services, with a further £29,255 allocated to the out of school care sector.

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

This year, continuing to support families to make the most of their money has been paramount. The Cost of Living Crisis has hit everyone's pockets, but low income families are 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, NHSGGC, the third sector and more widely, we have worked together to mitigate the Cost of Living Crisis where we can, embedding advice and augmenting processes to encourage take up of advice.

Over the winter period, we worked again 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. Our Fairer Renfrewshire work includes 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, HSCP, Social Security Scotland and most recently NHSGGC coming together to share information and work to reduce gaps and coordinate services. Our refreshed School Meal Debt process has support for families at its core.

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.

5.1. Income maximisation through advice

Throughout 2023/24, 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 **£9.4 million**, with an additional **£1.18 million** in mandatory reconsiderations and appeals. Advice Works have also helped clients manage **£3.45 million** in debt.

The Council-funded Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau's (RCAB) general service gave over 8,300 appointments and has gained **£2.1 million** for the people of Renfrewshire this year. This is in addition to the 381 people seen by the Legal Service, who had additional gains of over **£24,000**. The Welfare Rights service had 549 contacts resulting in 276 clients and **£205,854** in financial gain for clients. New debt cases this year have led to nearly **£9.7 million** worth of debt being managed.

Overall, between the two services, **7,992** clients fell into Child Poverty Priority families, with the disabled child/adult in a family being the largest category: 1,897 seen by RCAB and 1,935 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 2023 during 'Talk Money Week', with the aim of maximising income for low-income households. 37 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 continue to cascade 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.

5.2. Family Advice and School Support

Recognising the impact of dedicated income maximisation support for families with children, during 2023/24, work was undertaken to redesign current advice provision for families to increase the capacity and reach of our advice services and two advice pilots started – a family advice service within Advice Works and a schools advice service provided by RCAB.

£140,000 of Fairer Renfrewshire funding was allocated to pilot the new dedicated **family advice service**, which was 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 that is provided by RCAB. In particular, Advice Works will collaborate with primary 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 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 support for parents.

The Family Advice service commenced on 1 January 2024, and 331 families were assisted with a client financial gain of £139, 584 recorded so far. It should be noted that this figure will rise, once outcomes are known where the various awarding organisations have yet to make decisions on the financial support applied for.

£100,000 was allocated to RCAB to support an embedded model of advice in all Renfrewshire secondary and additional support needs schools for a two-year period. The 'School Support Service' started in August 2023 and provides advice to:

- all secondary and additional support needs 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 Social Security Scotland Benefits
- Money and debt
- Free School Meals, School Clothing Grants, and other benefits in kind, also collaborating with secondary and ASN school office staff to address issues such as school meal debt more proactively
- Benefits that come directly to young people, such as free bus travel and Education Maintenance Allowance.

RCAB 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. Where appropriate, the support provided is complemented by existing RCAB general and legal advice services. The 'School Support 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.

Since the service commenced in August 2023 there have been 129 advice appointments/contacts made and the service has helped 83 families with a client financial gain of £26,418.

5.3. Healthier Wealthier Children

The Healthier Wealthier Children (HWC) pathway allows referrals from maternity and early years staff 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 service, provided by Advice Works, provides income maximisation advice and support for families. Support provided includes benefit checks, support applying for benefits, help to reduce and manage debts,

access to emergency funds and grants, support with budgeting and assistance dealing with food and fuel poverty.

During 2023/24 there were 302 referrals received for HWC, with 58% of those referred engaging with the service and being supported with 437 matters. This resulted in direct financial client gains of £323,255.31 for families. The majority of those who were supported by the service are in at least one of the child poverty priority groups: lone parents (32%), families with a child under one (29%), families that include a disabled adult or child (11%), ethnic minority families (10%), mother under 25 years (9%) and families with 3 or more children (5%).

Between February and March 2023, a baseline audit of Health Visitor (HV) records was carried out. Findings from this audit led to an updated financial inclusion referral pathway for HWC. Bespoke training sessions were delivered to 75 staff within Renfrewshire HSCP Children and Families Team. These sessions focussed on providing current child poverty data, financial inclusion audit findings and recommendations, HWC Pathway and how to add a HWC referral to IT systems, other resources such as information on foodbanks, crisis grants and how to apply, and cost of living resources.

Following the training sessions, there has been a 25% increase in referrals (175 referrals) to HWC received from HVs during 2023/24, compared to 2022/23 (132 referrals). A similar pathway has been developed for maternity services with bespoke training sessions planned.

5.4. 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 and 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, **£1,002,752** has been gained for **681** clients. In addition, a service for those with Long-term Conditions commenced last year, with **317** service users gaining **£198,469**.

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

5.5. 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. The Health Improvement Lead with responsibility for the service, is part of Renfrewshire's Advice Partnership.

In the Royal Hospital for Children in Glasgow, which supports Renfrewshire families, the **Money & Debt with Advocacy** service supports any families who have a child as an inpatient or who attend the hospital as an outpatient. It sees families from all child poverty priority groups working closely with families who often experience major life changing circumstances due to a child being born with a medical condition, or a child suddenly becomes unwell or they are diagnosed with a lifelong or life limiting illness. These Parents often become Carers and they are faced with increasing and additional costs of caring for a child with a disability or lifelong or life limiting illness. 9 families from Renfrewshire were supported this year. The **Blossom, Maternity Matters** service which provides a person centred approach to pregnant women with multiple vulnerabilities also supported a small number of Renfrewshire families during 2023/24.

Stronger Start is an embedded Money Advice and Advocacy Service offered to women who engage with the Blossom Maternity Service across Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire. Stronger Start staff are co-located within the outpatients department at the RAH Maternity Hospital, Paisley and offer a person centred wrap-around service involving money advice and advocacy provision which is flexible and tailored to individual need. Stronger Start aims to support at-risk women to maximise their income, increase financial capability, increase resilience for the future and increase health and wellbeing. In turn, this may prevent homelessness, and will tackle debt issues, as well as addressing other health and poverty-related issues.

This service was developed through a Stronger Start Steering Group established and chaired by Renfrewshire HSCP Health Improvement team and consisting of key partners, including from Council services across Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire. The Steering Group worked closely with Renfrewshire CAB, to support them in being awarded funding from the Improving Lives National Lottery Fund to run the Stronger Start Pilot for a year and has led on the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Pilot.

The pilot was launched on 13th February 2024 and by the end of Q4, Blossom midwives had referred 12 eligible women to the service with eight women engaging with Stronger Start staff. All people referred to the service fall within the six child priority family types that face additional barriers to moving out of poverty.

The Improvement Service will support the evaluation of the Stronger Start pilot and to ensure sustainability of the pilot, consideration of future funding is ongoing.

5.6. Tackling food and fuel insecurity

Support around food and fuel has had an increased focus during the Cost of Living Crisis, with a number of new and established projects and services supporting families in 2023/24.

Community Food Fund

Following on from the previous awards, in 2023/24, £25,000 of funding was allocated to provide small awards to organisations to support community food offerings which promote dignified, localised, access to food and community resilience. Eleven awards were made, with five of these projects specifically supporting young people and families. Projects covered growing, cooking and supporting FareShare membership for some of Renfrewshire's Pantries.

Fair Food Renfrewshire

With the support of Nourish Scotland, engagement has taken place with a wide stakeholder group to help shape the Vision, Charter and the work priorities of Fair Food Renfrewshire. A local partnership has been formed to develop Renfrewshire's strategy with the Head of Policy and Partnerships assuming the role of Food Champion. Development sessions of local food partnerships have taken place with input from Nourish Scotland/Glasgow City Food Partnership and Renfrewshire HSCP Health Improvement Teams and a Steering Group formed.

A draft Vision and Charter have been developed with three priority areas:

- Working to reduce, then eradicate food poverty, by promoting a collaborative approach across all communities, ensuring a dignified and fair access to healthy and affordable food for all.
- Increased access and availability of growing grounds in every town and village within Renfrewshire.
- Widening access and availability to educational opportunities regarding nutrition and cooking skills, and wider use of "home economics" type classes within education, health, and community settings.

In addition to support for local food provision, Renfrewshire is committed to exploring new ways of working together with local partners to develop a healthier, fairer and more sustainable food system locally. The food partnership brings 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.

Community Food Framework

The HSCP Health Improvement team secured funding from NHSGGC Public Health team in January 2024 to implement a Community Food Action Plan within Renfrewshire that aligns with Fair Food Renfrewshire principles and Community Wealth Building. The plan aims to support healthy eating through community-based awareness-raising and skills development activities with a view to help improve diet, support a healthier lifestyle and reduce health inequalities.

The funding is being used to assist with:

- The provision of free training for 24 local community chefs to help develop community food literacy and deliver cookery programmes to local organisations and families.
- The delivery of free cookery classes which include ingredients for families to take home and cook themselves.
- A small grant fund, which is supporting 10 local organisations to begin, or continue developing, healthy community food provision that promotes dignity and resilience within Renfrewshire.
- Helping organisations that support people from ethnic minority backgrounds to target health and food activity and increase access to healthy foods.
- Providing training opportunities to the local voluntary sector to support employability.

A mapping exercise was completed to identify key community partners/groups who would benefit from training and additional funding to deliver cooking classes and/or demonstrations. This training enhances knowledge and skills of local people and in turn supports opportunities for employment. Engagement with local organisations including Our Place Our Families, Tannahill Centre, Pachedu and Active Communities allowed the provision of funding for these organisations to deliver cooking classes and demonstrations to families, including a food packs to allow families to recreate the recipe at home. A bespoke train the trainer community cooking course is being planned to target ethnically diverse community groups who work with families from the child poverty priority groups.

A funding specification was distributed to allow local third sector organisations, schools and pre 5 centres to apply for funding to develop or enhance community growing initiatives. The funding went to 10 projects, including primary schools and nurseries.

In collaboration with NHSGGC Public Health team, Health Improvement will monitor, report and evaluate the Community Framework activities for 2024/25.

Nourish Nurseries

Renfrewshire HSCP Health Improvement secured funding in January 2024 to pilot Nourish Nurseries within 4 pre five centres over a period of 4 weeks before the end of term 2024. This project aims to provide nurseries with a weekly supply of fresh vegetables which can be used in nursery learning activities, for snacks or cooking, or for children to take home to use at home with their families. This initiative is part of the Peas Please project which aims to make it easier for everyone in the UK to eat more vegetables with a particular focus on low income groups and children. The Health Improvement team have worked closely with Renfrewshire Council Education to scope and agree the appropriate nurseries to take part in the pilot based on the most recent child poverty statistics.

Emergency Infant Formula Pathway

As food inflation rates have risen, the cost of Infant formula has increased and evidence suggests that for low income families, accessing infant formula is becoming more challenging. Healthcare professionals are reporting that families have been watering down the milk, spacing out feeds and/or introducing their baby to solids before they are ready. Watering down infant formula and early introduction of solids to babies is unsafe and puts infant's health at risk.

In February 2024, the Scottish Government published guidance in the form of a toolkit to support the development of Infant Formula pathways across Scotland. In order to ensure the best start for children in Renfrewshire an evidence based approach to the pathway is being implemented. Renfrewshire's Pathway will support the Convention on the Rights of the Child and encompass all Infant Feeding.

To inform the development of the pathway, Renfrewshire HSCP and Council colleagues have attended two Scottish Government Infant Food Insecurity events to explore examples of good practice in emergency pathways for infant formula and cash first solutions and inform the development of the Infant Food Insecurity toolkit.

A self-assessment template based on UNICEF Guidance has been undertaken to support the Council and Health Board to consider the key elements of developing a crisis support pathway for families with infants. This included:

- Establishing current referral pathways for money advice
- Establishing food providers service provision and pathways

- Mapping of touchpoints a parent/carer with a child under 1 year old would have with NHS, HSCP, Council and third sector.
- Exploring funding options to emergency infant food provision.

Scoping of activities within NHSGGC localities that have been taking forward a range of actions to respond to families (with an infant under 12 months) experiencing financial crisis and food insecurity has been completed. This included the sharing of learning in the development, implementation and monitoring of an emergency pathway in Glasgow City and Inverclyde.

Work to develop the pathway has progressed with Council colleagues and Whole Family Wellbeing. The pathway is being finalised to ensure a cash first approach via Whole Family Wellbeing support. The pathway is rights-based, free from stigma, aligns with trauma informed approaches and is integrated into wider local supports and provisions to minimise repeated need for crisis intervention.

Energy support

Renfrewshire Council's **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 23/24 was £256,663 through supporting 942 clients, many of which were families with children.

In addition, following on from investment over the last two years to support those struggling with fuel costs with advice and vouchers during the cost of living crisis, £20,000 was allocated to **RCAB** to continue the advice aspect of the project during 2023/24. Using this funding, 568 clients were supported, with the financial gain linked to this project being £36,165.36 in savings/grants/vouchers, and £20,812.17 in Energy Debt amendments and write offs.

5.7. 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, which was launched in May 2023, can be accessed [online](#) with shortened PDF versions of each of the five categories of the resource also available for staff to use. Looking forward, the resource will be embedded within the NHSGGC Health Visitor App, which aims to increase staff access to information to tackle child poverty.

Feedback on the resource from staff from Renfrewshire and across Greater Glasgow and Clyde has been positive. Comments from staff include the following:

“Thanks for sharing. These are fantastic – we will share within our circles”

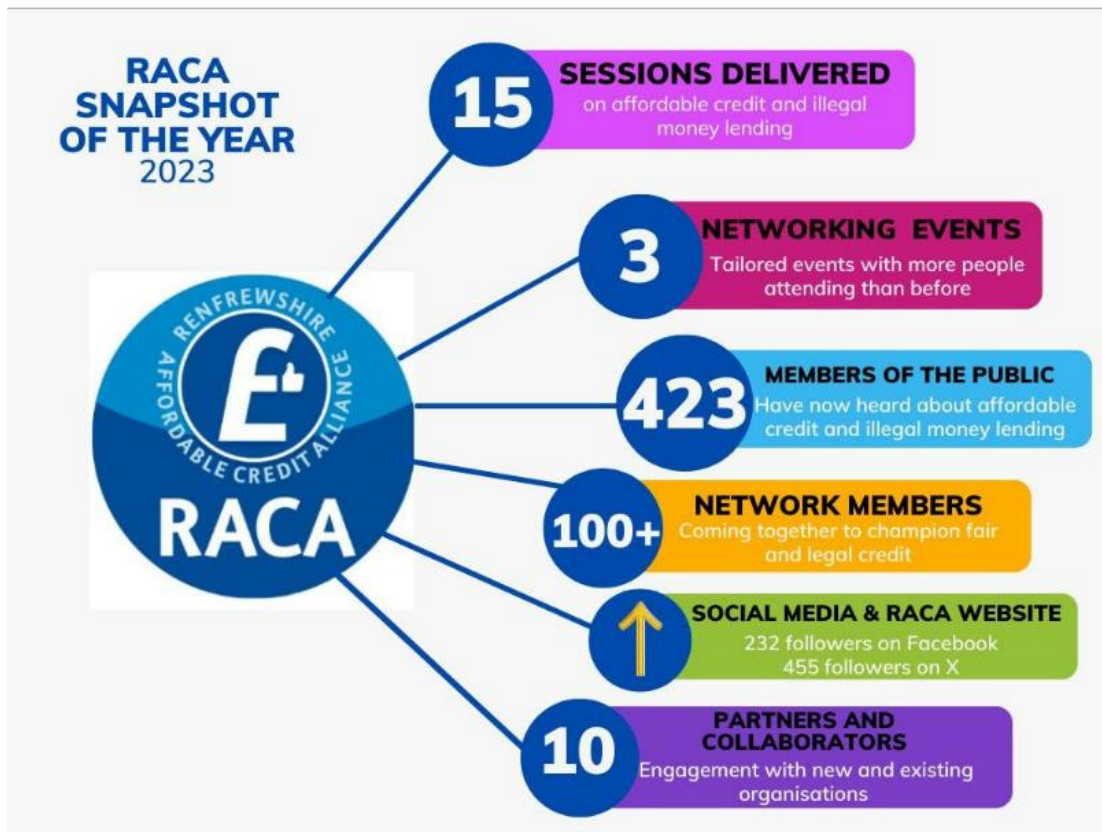
“Just to let you know I’ve shared this with our short life working group – made up of Health Visitors and Family Nurse Partnership leads from each HSCP and the resources were well received.”

5.8. Affordable Credit

Engage Renfrewshire, our Third Sector Interface has led an affordable credit initiative under the banner of Renfrewshire Affordable Credit Alliance (RACA –www.RACA.org.uk) for a number of years. Funded by Trading Standards Scotland over the last year, the initiative employs an Affordable Credit Officer (ACO) who is jointly managed by Engage Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire Council. The ACO works within Renfrewshire communities covering two priority areas; promotion of affordable credit options in Renfrewshire, and the prevention/reduction of people using illegal money lenders. They have also supported the Multiply Programme, working with groups to support them around use of everyday maths, such as understanding what affects credit scores, APR and similar.

Over the past year, the ACO has engaged with organisations, including several Renfrewshire Housing Associations and organisations supporting those with mental health issues and caring responsibilities. She has also engaged with groups supporting child poverty priority groups such as lone parents, ethnically diverse families and those with a health condition or disability.

Work has also been carried out with young people, speaking about safe borrowing, budgeting and other money concerns.



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

Supporting this work, Renfrewshire’s HSCP Health Improvement Team developed and facilitated a session at RACA’s Networking and Information event focussed on “Money and Mental Health” in June 2023. From this event, the Health Improvement Team and RACA continued to work in partnership to populate the Money and Pension Service (MaPS) “Money in Mind” Tool for Renfrewshire.

This tool, which is available on the Engage Renfrewshire website, allows staff members to explore issues an individual might be experiencing about money, as well as contact details of local services and organisations to signpost or refer the individual to. The tool was developed for mental health professionals, however it can be used by a range of health and social care staff. The Health Improvement Team and RACA will continue promote the tool across Renfrewshire during the year ahead.

5.9. Digital

For specific groups of people there remain real barriers to accessing digital 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 2023/24. 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 2023/24, which will be carried over to 2024/25 is the development of Digi Zones. This project will see locations across Renfrewshire branded as DigiZones 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. Over the last year, agreement has been made with OneRen libraries and 3rd sector to pilot DigiZones in 2024, and the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel has been involved in discussions around how these should work.

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 devices collected by libraries, passed for refurbishment and refurbished devices being targeted to digitally excluded families and individuals including at larger families where children need to share devices. Agreement has been reached to pilot the 'Renfrewshire Recycle IT' project in 3 libraries early in 2024/25, with the project expected to roll out to all libraries soon after. The Council is working with OneRen libraries and 3rd sector organisation Input Community Works to take this forward.

The Council has continued to develop a Digital Champions network in partnership with OneRen and £80,000 has been allocated to this project to employ a digital volunteer coordinator who has been in place since May 2023. This initiative, in partnership with SCVO and Mhor Collective has built 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. In the last year, 18 volunteers have been recruited and 380 people supported with 358 hours of support provided.

There is recognition 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 increase awareness about these tariffs to those who may be eligible.

Renfrewshire Council is overhauling its digital infrastructure. With Connectivity recognised as a need, a Connectivity Strategy has been developed to meet our current and future needs, as well as those of other public, private and third sector organisations, academic institutions, citizens, students and visitors. As part of work completed in 2023 our children and young people in primary schools are benefiting from 20-times faster connections, while secondary schools will enjoy uploads and downloads 50-times quicker than currently provided. In addition 27 of our schools received the Digital Schools Award.

5.10. Winter Connections

First run in Winter 2022/23, £75,000 was allocated to run a [Winter Connections](#) programme between October 2023 and March 2024. An additional £10,000 was allocated from the Recovery Change Fund to ensure that Winter Connections activities were open to people affected by drugs and alcohol and people living with mental illness. 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

The assessment panel consisted of Council, HSCP and 3rd sector representatives to ensure a transparent cross sector approach, and 46 projects were funded across Renfrewshire. A further £6,000 was allocated to One Ren to support the programme provide hot drinks, soup, and snacks in all Renfrewshire libraries and for families using the SkoobMobile service at their community stops.

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.

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:

- a LEGO STEM club
- a language café for refugees and asylum seekers
- 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
- Homework/after school clubs

Evaluation has shown that not only did more than double the number of Renfrewshire residents engage with the second year of the programme than the first, the programme was also well received and has had a positive impact, with encouraging feedback from the groups involved.

“Some from the group have taken recipes home to cook with their families. It also ensured that the children were given a hot dinner and a warm place after school.”

Active Communities

“Our Winter Connections project provided support for individuals with a diverse demographic, including families with young children, older/vulnerable adults, people from ethnically diverse communities and individuals struggling with substance use. No individual was exempt from our activities; they were all linked by being negatively impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and experiencing social isolation. People accessed the project from all over Renfrewshire, and there was an even distribution between genders. Our largest demographic was primarily local families.”

STAR Project

5.11. Summer of Fun

In March 2023, core funding of £100,000 was allocated through the Fairer Renfrewshire programme to support the development of a summer holiday programme, [Summer of Fun](#), with a focus on providing support over the holiday period to low-income families. £20,000 of funding was also allocated from the Future Paisley programme to enhance cultural experiences for low-income

households. The Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel played a key role in directing how this funding could be used.

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

The funding was used in a number of ways to support varied provision across Renfrewshire:

- £55,000 was used for a small grants programme for local community groups and organisations to deliver free activities over the summer holidays which could reach communities that might be underserved by mainstream activities, particularly low-income families.
- Renfrewshire's Community Learning and Development team developed a varied programme of activities for children and young people with the provision of a healthy meal and worked with partners to significantly extend planned provision across Renfrewshire.
- Responding to the need for provision for children and young people with an additional support need. £40,000 was allocated to Riverbrae ASN playscheme. 190 families took up the offer of support for families, and fun engaging activities and free play time was delivered throughout the summer holiday period.
- In addition, OneRen was allocated £9,910 to provide a programme of activities across all 12 Renfrewshire libraries.

Local community and voluntary organisations could apply for grants of up to £5,000 from the **Summer of Fun Community Programme** to cover costs of activities, including venues, activities, food, transport and sessional staff. Smaller awards of up to £500 were also available for organisations with existing activities over the summer to provide healthy snacks or food. Applications were considered for single events or programmes of activities, designed for whole families or for children and young people of a range of ages.

All projects agreed to the following principles:

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

Overall 17 projects were funded through Summer of Fun, to a total of £53,841.60 with a wide range of activities for children and young people of all ages along with healthy snacks/ lunches and drinks.

Activities that were offered included:

- Toddler play sessions
- Summer playschemes offering free childcare
- Free outdoor activities in local parks
- Day trips to local visitor attractions to allow families to make memories together
- Arts and crafts and creative activities, such as pottery painting, jewellery making, sewing and baking
- Sports activities such as football, Zumba dancing, scuba diving, snorkelling and water confidence
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Maths)
- Drama workshops

In addition Future Paisley funded 3 projects which were arts based and provided opportunities for children and young people to access the benefits of art, music and creativity without any financial barriers.

The fund was very oversubscribed, and it was not possible to approve all applications received. Unsuccessful applicants were signposted to other support or information about sources of funding via Engage Renfrewshire.

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

Home Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde

Community Learning and Development Summer Camps delivered a varied programme of activities for children, families, and young people. The holiday camps were held in 6 venues across Renfrewshire with a focus on reaching families most at need.

A programme was developed offering several core activities targeted to 5-14 years from low-income families, along with youth work provision, a youth voice and participation programme, sports activities and youth bus delivered by Street Stuff and an Adult & Family Learning programme.

Care was taken to work closely with services such as Children’s Services Social work, Education and other partners to identify groups of young people that were particularly impacted or vulnerable and to signpost them towards and sign them up for universal activities. The aim was to develop a

programme of integrated provision to address the barriers and isolation faced by people in the most deprived areas, concentrating on the child poverty priority groups.

The **Riverbrae ASN playscheme** responded to the need for provision for children and young people with an additional support need. 190 families took up the offer of support for families, and fun engaging activities and free play time was delivered throughout the summer holiday period which included:

- Free transport for parents within Renfrewshire
- A nutritious meal and healthy snacks throughout the day
- Indoor and outdoor activities – including sports and creative arts
- Much needed social interaction with other young people
- Staff who could respond to each individual child's needs

A gap in service provision was identified for some children with additional support needs who were not eligible to participate in the summer programme being delivered at Riverbrae. CLAD Youth Services provided Print Screen Painting, General Arts and Crafts and Sports Activities for 14 young people from Mary Russell school 1 day per week throughout July.

In addition, OneRen was allocated £9,910 to provide a programme of activities across all 12 Renfrewshire libraries, including:

- Giant games
- Lego
- Marble run
- Campfire and sensory storytelling
- Mini zoos
- Petting zoo

Most activities were drop in and snacks and drinks such as popcorn and flavoured water were provided for children at selected activities. This allowed a coverage of activities in areas where no Summer of Fun activity was proposed.

The approach built on the successes from previous summer programmes and the partnership working between services. The summer provision also ensured a varied programme catering for families, children, and young people across the whole of Renfrewshire.

5.12. Cash-first approaches to supporting families

Scottish Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments

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**, however all of the available funding wasn’t spent within that year so the underspend was carried forward to 2023/24 to be used that year, and in 2023/24 Scottish Welfare Fund was topped up by **£300,000**.

We have also administered cash payments of £2.35 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. In a change to previous years and to support family budgeting, the summer 2024 payment will be made in 3 installments every fortnight, rather than one lump sum at the start of the holidays.

Winter Clothing Payment

For the third year running, funding was allocated to provide a £50 payment per child for winter clothing for children in receipt of School Clothing Grant. At the Council’s Budget meeting in March 2023, £300,000 was allocated to these payments and paid in October 2023. This payment has been well received and will be repeated in Winter 2024, with again, £300,000 allocated in the 2024/25 Budget.

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.

In addition, all of our Winter Connections and Summer of Fun venues were offered free products and many have now signed up to keep a permanent supply for their service users or the wider public. This means we have managed to reach new areas and have improved reach to youth clubs and other organisations working with teenagers and children of all ages.

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.

In 23/24 we ran a limited number of ‘Reusables Roadshows’. These were popular, and we intend to expand these during 2024/25 and attend venues such as pantries and community centres, linking

with other Council, Health and 3rd sector services to be part of a range of supports offered to those living with low incomes.

5.13. National Entitlement Card and Free Bus Travel

Approximately 86% 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. This is an increase from 79% last year, and is the highest in Scotland.

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 for anyone in school. Instead of families having to pay for required proofs to apply, (e.g. full birth certificate extracts), we use their school record to verify their details, simplifying and poverty proofing the process. Extra support has been put in place to help boost uptake of the Junior NEC, offering parents a manual form to complete within primary schools. Targeted promotion is planned in areas with significant child poverty alongside parents of pupils in ASN schools who may need support to access a Disabled NEC.

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.

5.14. Housing

Renfrewshire's Housing Strategy, approved in October 2023, has five strategic priorities. Each priority has a range of actions that will support delivery over the next five years.

The five strategic priorities are:

1. The supply and delivery of housing is increased across all tenures to meet the housing needs of different groups and create attractive and sustainable places.
2. People live in high quality, well managed homes in sustainable neighbourhoods.
3. Address the challenges of the climate emergency, delivering homes that are warm, energy efficient and fuel poverty is minimised.
4. Prevention of homelessness and providing support for those in housing need.
5. People can live independently for as long as possible in their own home and the different housing needs of people across Renfrewshire are being met.

The actions underpinning the priorities include:

- continuing to provide good quality fuel poverty advice, income maximisation and information to Council tenants, owners and private tenants.
- continuing to strengthen the approach to prevention and repeat homelessness by providing holistic wraparound support to households in Renfrewshire.
- ensuring new build homes are energy efficient, and retrofitting existing social rented homes with measures to improve energy efficiency, which will support reduction in energy bills as well as emissions, and
- working towards meeting national fuel poverty targets.

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 numbers being supported at our Welcome Hub at hotels near Glasgow Airport has continued to reduce over 23/24, with 44 individuals now residing there. This is down from a high of over 400 in Autumn/Winter 2022.

Housing Services have been instrumental in providing settled accommodation to UDP's and, to date, a total of 158 social rented properties have been provided to Ukrainian households in Renfrewshire with a range of integration events now regularly taking place, as well as activities with partners such as 3rd sector organisation, Impact Arts.

As is the case across most of Scotland, there continues to be increased demand for assistance from our Homeless and Housing Support Services. A number of measures have been identified which continue to be implemented in order to ensure those who require somewhere to stay are provided with temporary accommodation and the support they need. These measures include an increase

in the stock of temporary accommodation, meeting the target for lets to those who are homeless by the Council, recruitment of additional frontline staff on a temporary basis, and RSL partners increasing their targets for lets to those who are homeless.

The number of those being supported via **Housing First** at any one time now exceeds 70, and the **MyLA project** (My Life Ahead) has received additional funding from the Alcohol & Drug Programme Board in 23/24 to allow the initiative to support those with alcohol/drug issues and who are at risk of losing their settled home.

The **More Homes Service** offered by the Regeneration and Development Team is actively promoted on the Council website, on social media channels and with local estate and letting agents. The service includes offering advice and assistance to owners of private properties that have been vacant for over 6 months and are classed as long-term empty throughout Renfrewshire.

From a property acquisition perspective, 37 offers to purchase have been made this financial year as part of the acquisition scheme. Twelve of these have resulted in the successful acquisition by the Council and a further eight are in progress. The continued work of the More Homes Service is invaluable to the work we are carrying out in reducing the number of empty homes across Renfrewshire and increasing the Council's lettable stock to tackle increasing demand from the housing waiting list.

Housing Led Regeneration and Renewal Programme

Through Renfrewshire Council's Housing Led Regeneration and Renewal Programme, we are taking forward a £100m investment programme to help improve council housing within Renfrewshire by creating modern, affordable, high-quality, energy-efficient council homes. Phase 1 will focus on eight areas across Paisley, Renfrew and Johnstone.

The programme will make major improvements to existing buildings, but it is about much more than that - we will also consider how to improve the wider environment, including outside and communal areas, and how to keep fuel bills down by making homes more energy-efficient. As well as improvements to existing homes, we are building around 350 new council homes across four of the areas. Residents were consulted in summer 2021 on the initial plans for their area, and changes were made to the plans based on the responses to that.

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. In 23/24, support was increased,

including more advice provision and in addition a **Tenant Support Fund** was launched in October 2023. The Tenant Support Fund, is intended to supplement the current rent collection process and is a temporary measure to alleviate existing and emerging financial stress, prevent and reduce escalating rent arrears and contribute to sustaining Council tenancies in Renfrewshire.

The Fund is intended to support tenants experiencing financial difficulty, through no fault of their own, where it has been identified that financial challenges exist due to a change of circumstances including, but not limited to:

- Increase in household costs / cost of Living (eg. energy, food, fuel, rent).
- Reduction in income (eg. loss of employment, reduced hours, loss of a household member).
- Changes to Welfare benefit, Housing Benefit and/or Universal Credit.

As part of our existing rent collection process, tenants are encouraged to engage with the housing team at the earliest opportunity if they are experiencing difficulties in paying rent. A wide range of advice and support is available to help tenants to meet their rent payment responsibilities and to manage household budgets that will be under increased pressure at this time.

In recognition of these continuing pressures, in addition to the introduction of the Tenant Support Fund, as part of the budgetary process on 2 March 2023, Council agreed to fund additional service provision in the form of **Specialist Income Advice** to allow for exclusive support to tenants in hardship.

Apart from benefits checks and support when an application to the Scottish Welfare Fund or for a discretionary housing payment should be made, the specialist Income Advisors and Housing Staff are able to make a referral to the local Housing Team to consider the appropriateness of making a payment to a tenant's rent account from the Tenant's Support Fund. A decision on the award of Tenant's Support Fund is made as soon as possible following engagement with the tenant and payment is made directly into the tenant's rent account. Income maximisation assessments are carried out to support tenants to meet their long-term rent payment responsibilities.

To date, 291 Tenants have been referred for Tenant Support Fund assessments, which will have the added value of full income assessment and advice provision 161 qualified for assistance from the fund to a value of approximately £32,000.

6. Theme 3: Supporting the next generation to thrive

6.1. Fairer Renfrewshire Programme

Renfrewshire's Fairer Renfrewshire programme now also includes what was previously our Tackling Poverty programme, supporting a number of projects which help our young people thrive and help break down some of the barriers to attainment.

The programme:

- Provides £75,000 **Cost of the School Day** funding which is used by head teachers as discretionary spend to meet the needs of their pupils
- Provides funding for **Breakfast Clubs** in schools in some of our most deprived areas, relieving financial pressure on low-income families, but most importantly, making 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
- Supports dedicated **income maximisation and welfare rights advice** for families with children of all ages as well as pregnant women.

Breakfast Clubs are part of a number of schools, some of which are funded through the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme and others through other means or organised by individual schools. In Tackling Poverty funded breakfast clubs only, 42, 815 free breakfasts were provided in 23/24 using Fairer Renfrewshire funding.

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 and provide They also provide/support school holiday programmes for ages 5 – 14 which includes the provision of a healthy meal, which was funded through Fairer Renfrewshire, including over the festive break and in October. **868** children attended the October holiday programme, of whom:

- 221 were from lone parent families
- 181 from large families
- 104 from households where someone has a disability
- 38 from ethnically diverse households
- 25 from families with a child under 1 and
- 1 was from a young parent family.

I'm a single mum. I pay £291 each month for a childcare, even during school holidays. Easter, Christmas and summer holidays are always paid additionally to this £30 for each day at after school care. The council camps help me a lot financially because I don't have to spend this £30 for these days.

Parent of attendee

Learning from lived experience – school holiday childcare provision

In the last year we have engaged with partners including the Fairer Renfrewshire lived experience panel and have reviewed the criteria for holiday activities to ensure Child Poverty Priority Groups are better targeted. This is now in our Summer of Fun small grants guidance and our most recent holiday camps have been directed at low income families through targeted communications to those receiving school clothing grants and working with 3rd sector partners and Social Work teams rather than opening camps to the general public. Early indications from our most recent Easter camp show that this targeting has worked, and low income parents are benefitting from the holiday provision.

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 provided a full programme of library access, book based activities, and play sessions for schools

and communities that promote reading and playing together, with more intensive engagement taking place within areas of deprivation.

The service has been involved in bringing play sessions to communities as part of our Winter Connections and Summer of Fun programmes as well as supporting primary schools storytimes and access to library digital resources and learning activities. The service also supports areas with no library during the school holidays.

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 overall are increasing. As an additional service developed last year as part of the Winter Connections programme, 11 community play sessions took place in areas with no or small libraries, and 114 children and 96 adults attended. At these sessions, as at community outreach, free snacks, hot drinks and cup a soups were offered to families.

Skoobmobile also reached 7480 primary school pupils in 362 sessions, 1316 pre-5 children and 325 adults were reached in 157 sessions. 5,003 books were borrowed and 351 children became members of Renfrewshire libraries. A further 4590 children and 1,728 adults attended 182 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 as well as commence Baby Sensory sessions in Gallowhill.

Love all the colourful monsters and their cute names, I love the outside design it's so colourful I love that the staff are so friendly, we love you all it's so cool that there's a library bus there's so many types of books and I picked the book that suited me best I love the atmosphere of the bus, it's nice to have space to read books on board

My dad reads books with me, I love reading at home

Attendees at School visits

Peer Health

Hearty Lives is our ambitious and innovative partnership project which delivers a peer-led approach to promoting mental health and wellbeing across all Renfrewshire high schools. It is a unique partnership which promotes mental health and wellbeing for young people in Renfrewshire

and aims to tackle poverty through a peer education approach, focused on tackling inequalities and improving health. In 2023, 196 Peer Educators were recruited and trained, engaging with 3445 peers.

Hearty Lives is driven by the core values of Active Communities whose mission is to empower local people by inspiring, supporting and enabling them to improve their health and wellbeing. Hearty Lives teachers are following this same mission for the pupils in their school.

Key issues being addressed by the project included bullying, exam stress, worry, anxiety, self-care, resilience and promoting positive mental health. Schools are linking their Hearty Lives projects to: Saltire Awards, SQA Wellbeing, SQA Mental Health and Wellbeing, Green Flag Awards, Fairtrade Awards and Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

The project has a community arm which is an extension of the schools work and is delivered by Active Communities in partnership with CREATE Paisley at Station Seven in Johnstone through a weekly Youth Drop In. The youth health project gives young people the opportunity to further explore youth health issues in an informal setting and delivers workshops on current health issues such as: coercive control, body image and self-esteem, social media and mental health, smoking, healthy eating, drugs and alcohol.

The community project also tackles wider social issues and is increasingly addressing basic needs of young people such as providing healthy food, toiletries, period products, access to free condoms and clothing.

Hearty Lives has had a huge positive impact on pupils involved. All pupils have developed their skills and knowledge and are confident in cascading this knowledge through peer education.

Paisley Grammar Project Leader

As part of Hearty Lives I was able to develop a range of skills and qualities. Learning about these helped me recognise my leadership skills and get a qualification.

Peer Educator

6.2. Attainment

Educational attainment is both a direct cause and consequence of poverty. We know that children and young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods have poorer educational outcomes

than their peers and this is known as the poverty related attainment gap. In Renfrewshire, there is a relentless focus on closing this gap and this is done in partnership with a range of services and partners.

Stretch aims were set again this year in collaboration with schools as part of the refreshed Strategic Equity Fund 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 are monitored annually and used as part of improvement planning. Our [Education Standards and Quality Report](#) gives some more detail.

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. However, there has been recovery for pupils living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2 (20% most deprived areas). Attainment of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas increased by 4 percentage points in literacy and 6 percentage points in numeracy between 2020-21 and 2022-23. While these figures are still behind pre-pandemic levels these increases are occurring at a greater rate than for pupils living in least deprived areas. This means that the significant increase in attainment gaps within the 2020-21 data have begun to decrease. The size of the gap between pupils living in 20% most and 20% least deprived areas has reduced by 2 percentage points in literacy and 5 percentage points in numeracy since 2020-21.

Senior phase attainment has been affected by the cancellation of exam diets in 2020 and 2021 therefore comparisons over time are inconsistent. However, positive destination figures for pupils living in 20% most deprived areas remain high. In the 2022/23 leavers cohort, 93% of pupils living in 20% most deprived areas went into a positive destination. This was in line with the previous year but represented a 2 percentage point increase since 2020. 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 2023.

As part of the SEF programme, we continue to deliver a range of approaches and interventions to address the poverty related attainment gap. Some of these are described in more detail below.

The poverty-related attainment gap starts in the early years and gets wider overtime. The development of the early year's progression toolkit has strengthened data and is being used to inform the type of support and approaches required as early as possible such as Playful SEAL (Stages of Early Arithmetical Learning), play pedagogy and Lego therapy.

A comprehensive programme of professional learning has been delivered focused on embedding core literacy and numeracy strategies such as Talk for Writing and Maths Recovery. The aim is to enhance practitioner knowledge, skill and confidence in pedagogy which will support closing the poverty related attainment gap in classrooms. Talk for Writing (TfW) is having a demonstrable impact on literacy attainment. Schools who started TfW in 21/22 have had the biggest improvement in attainment for learners from deciles 1-3 (+8.4%). Professional learning and modelling and coaching approaches in numeracy are leading to improved practitioner knowledge, skills and confidence. This is demonstrated in the quotes from practitioners below:

“Excellent course - really makes me reevaluate my teaching”.

“Out of all the professional learning I have had this year, having a Modelling and Coaching Officer (MCO) has by far been the most impactful and beneficial for myself and my class”.

Childhood poverty and mental health are inextricably linked and addressing mental health and wellbeing remains a priority. Between July 2023 - March 2024, over 1200 children and young people have been supported through our counselling services. As a result of our curricular programmes, resources and professional learning, we have seen improvements in health and wellbeing measures. Almost all establishments are using an evidence-based emotional literacy programme and a further 2 primary schools will participate in the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) programme in session 24/25 bringing the total number engaged to 38 establishments (primary and ELCC). ‘It’s a Mental Health Thing,’ Renfrewshire’s new mental health and wellbeing programme, launched in Sep 23 and the resource has supported young people’s knowledge around mental health issues.

The **Cost of the School Day (COSD)** funding is available to schools to remove financial barriers to education. This year, schools have used the funding to support residential experiences, activities week and whole school trips. This keeps costs down for families and ensures children can participate without stigma. Other examples include free uniforms for anyone who needs it and access to prom / communion outfits. Some schools have implemented a COSD policy where there are alternatives to events that generate costs for families such as no school uniform day and dressing up days.

“COSD enables all of our children to take part and to be included in these experiences and to minimise financial stress/anxiety for our families.”

“COSD is used in so many ways. The impact is being able to help and assist with what is needed in a timely, confidential manner.”

Cost of the school day funding is invaluable. We use it to make sure all of our young people have access to school uniform and warm clothing. This means our pupils can come to school and maintain their dignity by looking and feeling the same as their peers. We also use the funding to help provide a daily breakfast club; each day we feed over 200 children across all year groups. This has boosted attendance and we've noticed that our young people are more able to concentrate in lessons when they've had breakfast. To reduce stigma, it is important to us our breakfast club is freely available to all young people. We recognise that financial circumstances can change and any family can suddenly find themselves experiencing hard times. Cost of the school day funding allows us to offer a discreet helping hand during these difficult times.

Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) enables schools to improve the educational outcomes of children affected by poverty. Within the primary sector, PEF has been used effectively to support readiness to learn. Approaches include investment in health and wellbeing officers, inclusion support assistants and key workers. There is evidence that these roles have contributed to improved attendance and engagement and wider achievement. PEF has also been used effectively in the primary sector to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for targeted pupils. The roles of early learning and childcare officers (ELCOs) and maths modelling and coaching officers (MCOs) have been effective in contributing to these improvements.

Within the secondary sector, PEF has also been used to support readiness to learn, with a particular focus on counselling and improving attendance and engagement. Several secondary schools have also used PEF effectively to focus on literacy and numeracy recovery in S1 and S2. There are also strong examples of PEF being used to support work around employability and ensuring positive destinations for young people.

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 over 7000 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. Although the programme is universal, as of June 2023, 26% of children registered with the Imagination Library were from SIMD Quintile 1 and 22% from Quintile 2.

As of this month, 3,185 children are receiving books on a monthly basis and 3,864 children have previously benefitted but have now turned 5 and have graduated from the programme. The

amazing milestone of gifting 100,000 books was reached and celebrated by Renfrewshire Imagination Library in November 2023.

Case studies from Renfrewshire establishments and examples of good practice were shared by the Dollywood Foundation with MSPs at Scottish Parliament in March 2024 and were very well received. Feedback from establishments, parents and children continues to be very positive.

The Health Improvement Team and our Council partners are in the process of developing an evidence based approach for Renfrewshire around **Cost of the Nursery Day**. A mapping exercise concluded 44% of Early Learning Childcare Centres (ELCC) are in SIMD 1 areas across Renfrewshire. Currently Cost of the School day is operational across Renfrewshire, however there is no equivalent in our ELCC. The aim of implementation Cost of the Nursery Day is to identify poverty-related barriers to learning and participation in nurseries, and to develop practical ways to overcome them.

6.3. Whole Family Wellbeing

Excellent progress has been made to develop a whole family wellbeing service in Renfrewshire and the parenting strategy is embedded in this service ensuring that families get the right parenting support where and when required. The Whole Family Wellbeing Manager took up post full time in July 2023, supported by a project manager. Networking and engagement with key partners were undertaken during the first few weeks in post. The Renfrewshire family wellbeing service aligns with our GIRFEC staged intervention framework and offers support to families as early as possible to prevent problems or issues becoming more complex.

The family wellbeing service launch took place in May 2024. This publicised the new service and also launched the request for assistance process which will enable services to refer to each other as well as enabling parents to make direct request for support. Through a series of workshops and data analysis the RCSP identified gaps in services for the following:

- families of children with a neurodevelopmental disorder for example Autistic Spectrum disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) either pre or post diagnosis
- families of children (0-8) requiring parenting support and/or support for distressed behaviours
- families of children 11-16 displaying distressed and/ or risk-taking behaviour
- families of children with disabilities

5 local third sector organisations were directly funded to provide this support as part of the community family wellbeing services in October 2023 and a second round of funding to support a

further 11 third sector organisations has recently been approved which will support these priorities. This additional capacity will provide more opportunities for families to access a range of varied support across localities to meet needs. An evaluation strategy has been agreed and will evidence improvement against the national high level outcomes for measuring improvement in whole family wellbeing. A new family wellbeing scale evaluation tool has been introduced into our community family wellbeing teams and funded third sector organisations to help capture improvements in family wellbeing.

6.4. The Promise

We have entered year 4 of this 10-year programme of change with strong evidence of activity in Renfrewshire to #KeepThePromise with significant developments underway and more planned.

Delivering The Promise in Renfrewshire is part of a wider vision on improving outcomes for Children and Young People who are more likely to face poorer outcomes because of experience of child poverty, other inequalities, trauma and adversity. The Promise approach in Renfrewshire is supported at senior level and is clearly aligned with significant other policy areas and part of a wider ambition that Renfrewshire's children and young people are happy, healthy, safe and thriving. The Promise aligned policy areas include United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC), National Trauma Transformation Programme (NTTP) and wider equalities strategies and legislation.

The roll out of Promise Keeper role has progressed significantly since its inception, and we have ambitious plans to grow this network in 2024. There are currently **259** Promise Keepers across Renfrewshire. Promise Keepers are 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. All Promise Keepers undergo training to ensure that they have a good understanding of The Promise and are being supported to fulfil this role. A key strength of the Promise Keeper network is the facilitation of networking for staff from across the local authority, to ensure good practice is being recognised and shared appropriately.

The Promise is supported across the Council, HSCP, NHSGGC, 3rd sector and Community Planning Partners. The Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the HSCP are actively involved in supporting the delivery of The Promise in Renfrewshire. Their commitment to The Promise has led to the appointment of a permanent Renfrewshire Promise Manager jointly funded by the Council and the HSCP who reports to the Chief Social Worker. The CMT have agreed to further the work of The Promise in their own directorates and services.

There is considerable Promise activity in Renfrewshire, including supporting transition to secondary school through a Promise Team who will research what works well from the current transition programme and a curriculum delivery programme in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland.

6.5. 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 a number of organisations and services. They offer courses for adults including literacy, English language, crafting and mending, equalities, money management, parenting, personal development, life skills, wellbeing, women's history and work clubs which include digital skills. They also support the Multiply programme which aims to help transform the lives of adults aged 19yrs + across the UK, by improving their functional numeracy skills.

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. With the cost of living

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

- 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.
- Free Duke of Edinburgh Award places to targeted groups, including young carers and pupils attending ASN schools. 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.
- 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. 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. Personal hygiene items are also provided.
- Supporting 94 care experienced young people to take part in a range of arts based activities, with all materials, transport and refreshments provided free.
- Supporting the Promise Champion Present Drive, which provided Christmas gifts to 185 care experienced young people organised by the 19 Promise Champions who are care experienced young people who meet weekly to discuss issues that affect care-experienced young people and their views on support and care they have received.
- Establishment of a Young and Equally Safe in Renfrewshire pilot groupwork programme, with two groups of young men focussing on positive masculinity and examining coercive behaviour and attitudes towards women and girls.

Looking forward, the service will again deliver Easter and summer camps, as well as offer Family STEM activities in the holidays through the Multiply programme. They will also continue Youth Voice Development for Care Experienced young people through the Promise Champions, and include them in the new format of delivering care experienced engagement in communities.

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

6.6. Thrive Under 5

Since autumn 2023, Renfrewshire HSCP's Health Improvement team have led on the research, design and implementation of the Thrive Under 5 project within Renfrewshire. This programme takes a whole system, community food nurturing approach with the families of pre-school children, combining action on food and financial insecurity, healthy eating and physical activity.

In the initial stages, the Health Improvement team led on the collection of data and information from partners around child health, poverty and food insecurity to allow comprehensive data analysis before constructing a community asset map model of two localities in Paisley North West & Johnstone.

To provide strategic direction and governance for the Thrive programme, Health Improvement invited potential partners from local initiatives, infrastructure and Third Sector organisations to join the Thrive Under 5 Steering Group. The collective group are responsible for decisions relating to both the programmes structure, budget and spend, as well as implementation within the locality.

Based on the evidence of need, Johnstone has been selected as the Thrive Under 5 pilot area. The Steering Group agreed that local Third Sector organisation, Active Communities, would be the delivery partner due to their existing links to the local community and their facilities within Johnstone, which features a food pantry and a weekly money advice support drop in.

Service provision has been mapped out to include support for families from pregnancy to 5 years which will include:

- Support to apply for Best Start Grant and Best Start Food, Grants and Scottish Child Payment
- Applications to wider grants and benefit entitlements to maximise income including fuel support
- Meal packs for every family at least once a week for 8 weeks
- Access to local food pantry with free membership and free shops for families
- Free Cooking classes and provision of cooking equipment as required for every family
- Physical Activity Opportunities for whole family
- Onward referral to partner organisations such as Invest or any others based on family's needs.

To meet the referral criteria families must have at least one child under the age of 5, live in Johnstone and meet one of the risk factors for poverty. The reporting, monitoring and evaluation will be carried out by the Health Improvement team including quarterly reporting to Public Health NHSGG&C and Scottish Government.

6.7. Multiply

“Multiply” is a 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.

Renfrewshire Council chose to deliver and report on the following outcomes:

- New intensive and flexible courses targeted at people without Level 5 maths in Scotland.
- Courses designed to help people use numeracy to manage their money.
- Activities, courses or provision developed in partnership with community organisations and other partners aimed at engaging the hardest to reach learners

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. To the end of March 2024, **75** community-based numeracy/maths learning activities have run with **391** participants and 10 qualifications gained.

Apart from the courses aimed at gaining a qualification, the activities are based on everyday use of numbers in games, cooking, supporting homework skills, weights and measures and household budgeting and managing bills.



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