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**To:** Council

**On:** 24 September 2015

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**Report by:** Chief Executive

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**Heading:** Tackling Poverty Strategy and Action Plan

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1. **Summary**

- 1.1 The report details the key elements of the draft Tackling Poverty Strategy, which includes information of the governance, consultation and monitoring and evaluation arrangements to support the strategy and action plan.
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2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that members of the Council:
- approve the content of the Tackling Poverty Strategy set out in Appendix A
  - note the arrangements for governance, consultation and monitoring and evaluation.
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3. **Background**

- 3.1 The Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission was set up by the Council in February 2014. The Commission was asked by the Council to consider the nature, causes and impact of poverty in Renfrewshire and to make recommendations to mitigate and minimise the impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire.

- 3.2 The Commission published its report on Friday 13 March 2015, submitting the report to the Council and Community Planning Partners for consideration.
- 3.3 At the Council meeting on 23 March 2015 the Council endorsed all of the Commission's recommendations and made an initial allocation of £3.3 M from the £6M of Council resources set aside in the 2015/16 budget to support an early response to the work of the Commission. Recognising the value of a partnership response, the Commission's report was referred to the Community Planning Partnership Board to agree a coordinated, cross-partnership response to the findings and recommendations of the Commission and to report back to Council on 25 June 2015.
- 3.4 In June 2015, Council approved an action plan to tackle poverty developed by the Community Planning Partnership. This action plan fully committed the total of £6M set aside in the 2015/16 budget to enable an early response to the work of the Tackling Poverty Commission. The allocation of the additional resources is in addition to strategic investments already made by the council in support of longer term economic growth and regeneration and reaffirms the Council's commitment to tackle poverty and inequality
4. **Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Strategy**
- 4.1 The aim of the Tackling Poverty Strategy is to provide a formal response to the work of the Tackling Poverty Commission, which sets the £6 million Council investment within the context of the opportunities and challenges that Renfrewshire will face in coming years.
- 4.2 The strategy acknowledges that Renfrewshire has already started innovative work to tackle poverty. It highlights the importance that the Council continues to deliver programmes which are already having an impact, and continue to invest in developing innovative approaches. The strategy highlights Renfrewshire's achievements to date, such as Families First, Invest in Renfrewshire and Street Stuff – all of which have a robust evidence base which demonstrates real impact for low income citizens in Renfrewshire.
- 4.3 The strategy also puts the action plan in context of the opportunities that Renfrewshire faces with significant strategic investment through the City Deal and Paisley Town Centre Heritage Asset Strategy. It focuses on putting tackling poverty at the heart of all of the Council's major investments, making sure everyone in Renfrewshire is able to benefit.

- 4.4 The strategy acknowledges the challenges that Renfrewshire will face over the next few years, namely with further welfare reforms and the challenges to local authority and wider public sector funding. The strategy establishes protecting low-income families from financial challenges the Council faces as a priority and reinforces the Council's intention to challenge welfare reforms, which risk more children being pushed into poverty.
- 4.5 The strategy is structured into six key priorities as outlined by the Tackling Poverty Commission. These are:
1. Increase the number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living
  2. Prevent financial crisis and support low income families to make the most of their money
  3. Improve levels of physical and mental health of children in low income families
  4. Close the educational gap between children from low income families and their better off peers
  5. Create neighbourhoods where people want to live and can afford to live
  6. Narrow inequalities by working in a way which is inclusive, effective and evidence-based

## **5. Governance**

- 5.1 In June 2015, Council approved a Tackling Poverty Steering Group, which is comprised of chief officers from across the Council and key Community Planning Partners and stakeholders. This steering group will be chaired by the Head of Policy and Commissioning and will meet quarterly. The group will report to Leadership Board and Community Planning Partnership on the progress of the programme on a six-monthly basis.
- 5.2 There will be three project boards for the Tackling Poverty programme, which will drive the delivery of the projects within the Tackling Poverty Action Plan, and manage the relationships with the wide range stakeholders. The three project boards will report to the Leadership Board and the Council's Corporate Management Team, as appropriate. These three project boards will be themed in line with the key outcomes of the strategy:
1. Pockets – Maximising financial resources of families on low incomes
  2. Prospects – Improved life chances of children in poverty
  3. Places – Children from low income households live in well designed sustainable places

- 5.3 Existing governance arrangements for issues relating to welfare reform will be reviewed as the proposals around welfare reform and devolution of welfare are developed, but will report into the Pockets project board.

## **6. Engagement and consultation**

- 6.1 The engagement approach used within the Tackling Poverty Commission will be extended through the life of the strategy, to ensure that people's experiences are clearly heard through the development and delivery of the action plan. This engagement work is now underway, and sees the Council working with an extended range of third sector partners across Renfrewshire.
- 6.2 A session was held with a range of stakeholders from across the third sector in Renfrewshire in July, to establish interest in creating a network of organisations that can carry out ongoing consultation and conversation with their service users throughout the life of the Tackling Poverty programme.
- 6.3 A number of organisations are carrying out consultation sessions with their service users on the strategy and action plan over September 2015, as a continuation of (and in the same style as) the consultation work done by the Tackling Poverty Commission. The programme is currently engaging with the following wide range of third sector organizations; Stepping Stones, Families First, Childcare First, Local Energy Action Plan, Home-Start Renfrewshire, Engage Renfrewshire, Citizens Advice Bureau, Recovery Across Mental Health, Barnados Threads, Renfrewshire Foodbank, Renfrewshire Access Panel, Star Project, Save the Children, Foundations First (Shelter).
- 6.4 In the first instance, the Council is working with these organisations and their service-users to feed in to the monitoring and reporting processes for the Strategy and Action Plan, and more specifically to develop citizen-led measures of success and the methods for reporting progress on the programme.
- 6.5 Moving forward, the Council will be working with these organisations throughout the life of the programme to inform the development of projects within the Tackling Poverty Action Plan.
- 6.6 A workshop was held where council officers contributed views and ideas on how the impact of the Tackling Poverty programme can be measured moving forward. These will be incorporated into the performance monitoring of the programme moving forward.

- 6.7 Consultation has also been carried out with Community Planning Partners, with updates and discussions on the Action Plan being given at all of the Community Planning Thematic Boards in September. This included an engagement session with S6 students at the Children and Young People's Thematic Board.

## **7. Measurement and evaluation**

- 7.1 A Poverty in Renfrewshire 'dashboard' is being developed in order to give a more responsive picture of poverty in Renfrewshire, by looking at key causes and impacts of poverty as well as poverty levels themselves.
- 7.2 A draft set of indicators for the dashboard has been produced to support the strategy, and this is currently being developed with a range of stakeholders and is a key part of the engagement work with citizens.
- 7.3 The Tackling Poverty Programme team is in discussions with the Welfare Analysis team within the Scottish Government in the development of this dashboard moving forward, to ensure local measurements are aligned and supported by the national Child Poverty Measurement Framework.
- 7.4 Individual projects within the action plan are developing key performance indicators for the success of their projects, which will be monitored by the relevant project board.
- 7.5 The Community Planning Partnership has a target to 'reduce poverty to no more than 15% in any area' by 2020. This target, along with other related poverty targets within the Community Plan will be reviewed as part of the Single Outcome Agreement later in 2015.
- 7.6 It should be noted that where projects have been extended by the Tackling Poverty Action Plan, this is based on robust evaluations that have been carried out. For example, Families First and Street Stuff already have external evaluations that will be continued in the life of the project.
- 7.7 Where new approaches are being tested within the Action Plan, they will be appropriately evaluated, and the lessons learnt from these evaluations will be shared widely.
- 7.8 We will also commission a piece of qualitative research which follows the experiences of a selection of Renfrewshire families over the course of the programme, in order to understand how life events and different services affect the lives of our residents.

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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – The Strategy outlines the approach to support the delivery of the £6million of investment allocated within previous Council meetings
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - The Strategy outlines the approach to support the Tackling Poverty Action Plan, previously agreed by Council. The investment within the Action Plan has HR and Organisational Development impacts associated with the recruitment of a range of new posts.
3. **Community Planning** – The Community Planning Partnership has set challenging targets for reducing child poverty in Renfrewshire. The Tackling Poverty Strategy expected to have a positive impact on reducing the causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire. The recommendations contained in this report propose the development of a comprehensive and coordinated Community Planning response to the Commission's recommendations. All of the Community Planning Thematic Boards have been consulted with and updated on progress so far and the content of the draft strategy.
4. **Legal** – none
5. **Property/Assets** – none
6. **Information Technology** – none
7. **Equality & Human Rights** – The Tackling Poverty Strategy is of high relevance to equalities and human rights issues, but it is anticipated that the strategy and action plan will have a positive equalities impact as they represent investment and focus on a wide range of areas of social inequality. The development of the integrated poverty and equality impact assessment (agreed as part of the Tackling Poverty Action Plan) will play a key role in (a) identifying any adverse equalities and human rights impacts within the strategy and (b) maximising any opportunities to enhance equality of opportunity.
8. **Health & Safety** – none
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** - The Council and its partners are committed to breaking the poverty cycle in Renfrewshire. If the Council and partners do not

effectively tackle the causes and impacts of poverty in Renfrewshire there will be further polarity of poverty in Renfrewshire, increasing inequality and health inequalities, and greater demand for services. The Tackling Poverty Strategy is intended to mitigate and minimise the causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire.

11. **Privacy Impact** – none

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### **List of Background Papers**

- (a) Background Paper 1 – Tackling Poverty in Renfrewshire, Report of Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission
- (b) Background Paper 2 – Tackling Poverty Action Plan, Paper to Council (25/06/15)

The foregoing background papers will be retained within Chief Executive's Service for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Annabelle Armstrong-Walter, Policy Lead (Tackling Poverty, Welfare Reform and Equalities), 0141 618 5968, [Annabelle.armstrong-walter@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:Annabelle.armstrong-walter@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

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RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

# Tackling Poverty in Renfrewshire

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Tackling Poverty Strategy 2015-2017



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## Foreword by Councillor Mark Macmillan

Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission presented the Community Planning Partnership with its findings on child poverty in Renfrewshire in March 2015, along with some challenging recommendations for the Council and our partners. Our Tackling Poverty Strategy responds to these challenges, and provides the blueprint for our approach to tackling poverty.

The findings of the Commission were sobering. Too many of Renfrewshire's children continue to live on the breadline, and it's predicted that child poverty will rise across the country over the course of the next few years. Many of the key causes of poverty are out of Renfrewshire Council's direct control, but it's vital we use our influence to affect change where we can.

Our Council priorities are to increase opportunity in employment and education, support the most vulnerable members of our community and put in place the necessary strategic investment that will deliver positive change for Renfrewshire. Tackling poverty is core to achieving all our priorities, and therefore needs to be firmly at the core of everything we do.

Our strategy puts tackling poverty at the heart of our role as a service provider, educator, employer, community leader and landlord. Our commitment to tackling poverty is demonstrated by our early investment of a £6 million Tackling Poverty Action Plan over the next two years, which will deliver a raft of preventative and emergency measures to fight deprivation. We're committed to strong leadership around tackling poverty, both for our partners in Renfrewshire and on a national stage.

Poverty is not inevitable and we should not underestimate our ability to affect change locally. We already provide services everyday that stop people falling into poverty, and which mitigate the impacts of living in hardship.

Renfrewshire is entering an exciting time of investment and regeneration. I want everyone in Renfrewshire to be able to access the benefits of investments such as the City Deal and our Paisley Town Centre Heritage Asset Strategy, and we will do everything in our power to address the inequalities Renfrewshire faces.

The strategy and action plan provide a comprehensive roadmap for Renfrewshire Council for the next two years. It is the beginning of a long journey, and we will face significant challenges, but doing nothing to address the issue of child poverty in Renfrewshire is not an option.

Councillor Mark Macmillan



## Executive Summary

Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Strategy sets out a blueprint for our approach to tackling child poverty in Renfrewshire. It is supported by a £6 million Tackling Poverty Action Plan.

**Case study: Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission was set up to assess the nature, causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire. The Commission made recommendations for the introduction of a strategic approach to tackle poverty across Renfrewshire in March 2015.**

### Renfrewshire's strengths and challenges

**Renfrewshire has already started innovative work to tackle poverty.** We will continue to deliver and expand programmes which are already having an impact, and continue to invest in developing innovative approaches which address the causes of poverty.

**Renfrewshire is facing a time of unprecedented opportunity.** We will put tackling poverty at the heart of all of our major investments, making sure that we narrow inequalities and that everyone in Renfrewshire benefits.

**Renfrewshire also faces real challenges.** We will protect low-income families from the brunt of the cuts we face and we will challenge UK welfare reforms which risk more children being pushed into poverty.

### Our approach

Maximising incomes is at the core of our Tackling Poverty Strategy, but we have produced a comprehensive strategy and action plan which also seeks to address the persistent inequalities faced by people living in poverty.

We aim to prevent people from experiencing poverty in the first place, as well as mitigating the impacts of poverty and supporting people to lift themselves out of poverty.

We will look to build on what is already working well as well as developing ways of doing things differently.

Local people have a central role in defining the success of this strategy, and we will make sure that the stories and voices of people living in poverty remain at the centre of our decision-making.

## **Our priorities**

The strategy sets out a clear vision and 6 priorities:

1. **Income and employment** - Increase number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living
2. **Managing money** - Prevent financial crisis and support low income families to make the most of their money
3. **Health** - Improve levels of physical and mental health of children in low income families
4. **Attainment** - Close the educational attainment gap between children from low-income families and their better off peers
5. **Neighbourhoods** - Create neighbourhoods where people want to live and can afford to live
6. **How organisations should work** – Narrow inequalities by working in a way which is inclusive, effective and evidence-based

## **Delivering and evaluating**

Tackling poverty is a long-term aspiration that cannot be achieved in the next two years; our strategy is the next step in a long and challenging journey ahead.

The strategy provides the structure for our Action Plan, but also describes what are priorities are when delivering services everyday. It outlines what we are doing that is already working, as well as what we would like to do differently.

We still have a lot to learn. We will closely measure and evaluate our activities, and learn lessons about what works.



## What is poverty?

There are a number of different ways of describing poverty, with a wide range of definitions and measurements.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation defines poverty as ‘When a person’s resources (mainly their material resources) are not sufficient to meet their minimum needs (including social participation).’

**Quote: Measures are only part of the picture of the scale and the impact of poverty, Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission**

Poverty is, first and foremost, about household income. However, the experience of poverty is often much wider and more complex than just having a low income, with some people experiencing a range of disadvantages that extend beyond just not having enough money.

We understand that many people that we might describe as ‘living in poverty’ do not consider themselves to be living in poverty, or don’t associate with words like ‘poverty’ at all.

**We will challenge myths and misinformation about poverty.**

**Quote: ‘Poverty is changing, and our response needs to change’, Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission**

Some areas of Renfrewshire have much higher levels of poverty than others, and we often call these ‘deprived neighbourhoods’ as a result of area-based measures of poverty such as the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation. In some cases, the actions in our strategy are focussed on areas where we know there are more people living in poverty. However, we recognise that there are people living in poverty in all of Renfrewshire’s communities, and therefore challenge the view that poverty can be determined by where you live.

People don’t tend to stay in poverty forever. Many people who experience poverty will do so only for a short time, or will move in and out of poverty. Many of the actions target people who are living in poverty, whereas other actions are focussed on preventing people from moving into poverty by supporting people universally through life events or moments of transition (such as having a baby).

Some groups of people are at a higher risk of experiencing poverty, such as disabled people, lone parents and care leavers. That doesn’t mean that all people in these groups experience poverty, but it does mean that we need to think about the needs of these groups of people when we deliver our action plan.

## Poverty in Renfrewshire

The Tackling Poverty Commission carried out a detailed assessment of poverty in Renfrewshire which forms the evidence base for this strategy. The Commission's report details the key findings from its assessment of poverty in Renfrewshire. There is also a detailed 'Poverty Profile' of Renfrewshire, which supported the Commission's findings and can be found at [www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/tacklingpoverty](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/tacklingpoverty).

### Summary of key findings

**In Renfrewshire, more than 1 in 5 of our children is growing up in poverty**

**Infographic: Levels of poverty in key wards in Renfrewshire**

**Infographic: Families with children are the biggest group in poverty**

**Fact: A parent with two children aged 5 and 14 will be classed as living in poverty if their income (before tax but after housing costs) is less than £269 per week**

**Quote: '[You] feel like you are looking in on the rest of the work as there is such a divide', Participant, Star Project**

**Fact: Paisley Jobcentre Plus has the highest number of sanctions in the west of Scotland**

**Infographic: Inflation rates**

**Fact: A boy born in Bishopton lives on average 16.4 years longer than a boy born in Ferguslie Park**

**Infographic: Deprivation and attainment at P5 in Renfrewshire**

**Quote: 'The existence of poverty isn't due to individuals and if we accept that poverty is societal problem then we have to also accept that there is a societal response. Scotland is one of the richest countries in the world and yet we have families who are unable to eat properly. As a society, we need to say that we will no longer tolerate the existence of poverty.' Poverty Alliance**

## **Our approach: Renfrewshire's strengths and challenges**

### **Renfrewshire has already started innovative work to tackle poverty**

Renfrewshire has already established itself as a real leader in Scotland for its approach to tackling poverty.

Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission was the first of its kind in Scotland to look specifically at child poverty at a local level, and sets ambitious recommendations for the Council and our partners to meet.

Renfrewshire has been investing in innovative programmes that have already started to make a difference to people living in poverty across the area, such as our economic development programme 'Invest in Renfrewshire' and our Early Years Strategy 'Families First'.

We will continue to deliver and expand programmes which are already having an impact, and continue to invest in developing new and innovative approaches. We will also continue to focus on prevention and early intervention.

**Case Study: Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission was set up to assess the nature, causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire, and make recommendations for the introduction of strategic approach for the Community Planning Partnership. It published its report and recommendations in March 2015.**

**The Commission was the first of its kind in Scotland, and this is what made its recommendations different; they are designed to be delivered in partnership, and focused on making a difference at a local level.**

**More information on Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission can be found at [www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/tacklingpoverty](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/tacklingpoverty)**

### **Renfrewshire is facing a time of unprecedented opportunity**

There are big plans for Renfrewshire, with strategic investments like the City Deal and Paisley Town Centre Heritage Asset Strategy bringing major investment into the area.

The £1.13 billion Greater Glasgow and Clyde City Deal is an opportunity to transform Renfrewshire's economy by increasing employment and supporting growth with improved transport links.

We also have plans for Paisley which build on its rich cultural heritage, which will have a wider effect on all of Renfrewshire. This focus to put Paisley back on the map will also see Paisley bid for UK City of Culture 2021.

**Fact: The City Deal is expected to create 15,000 construction jobs while work is underway on its projects and 28,000 permanent jobs when work is finished.**

We will put tackling poverty at the heart of all our major investments, making sure that we narrow inequalities and everyone in Renfrewshire is able to benefit.

### **Renfrewshire also faces real challenges**

The UK government's welfare reforms have already had a significant effect on people in Renfrewshire. The latest announcement of welfare reforms still needs to be developed, but it is likely that new welfare cuts will continue to hit Renfrewshire families hard. Further devolution of powers within the Scotland Bill poses potential opportunities to mitigate these impacts, but many areas of welfare reform will remain within the control of the UK Government.

**Fact: Ferguslie Park is one of the 20 most affected wards in Scotland by welfare reform.**

Shrinking budgets and increases in demand for services will also continue to put pressure on local government budgets. Renfrewshire Council faces a significant shortfall between the money we receive and the costs of the services we must provide over the next three years.

Renfrewshire Council is proud of its success in protecting low income citizens from reductions in funding and we will continue to make sure that we protect low income citizens from cuts to front-line public services wherever possible.

**Quote: "[The cuts] risk putting local authorities in a situation where they will be unable to meet their statutory duties and unable to deliver critical services to their poorest and most vulnerable citizens" Cost of the cuts, Joseph Rowntree Foundation**

We will continue to condemn UK welfare reforms that risk more of Renfrewshire's children being pushed into poverty, and continue to mitigate the impact welfare reform locally.

### **Case study: A Better Council**

**We are constantly looking for ways to improve the services we provide, and increasing our focus on addressing inequalities. Our new Customer and Business Services function brings many of our front-line services together, such as our customer service centres, benefits teams and advice services. By doing this, we can make sure the service we deliver is much more streamlined, and reduce the need for people to contact lots of different teams, or to give us information multiple**

times. We're also bringing together teams that work in health with our social care teams as part of Health and Social Care Integration. Through our Customer Access project, people will be able to contact us in more convenient ways, such as paying bills online – and our customers who need more assistance face-to-face will be able to access help more easily.



## Our approach: Vision and priorities

**Vision:** We want a Renfrewshire where no child lives in poverty. All children should be able to achieve their potential and feel healthy, happy and valued, no matter how much money their parents or carers have.

We want a Renfrewshire where everyone understands that tackling poverty is everyone's responsibility. We believe that if we act locally, and in partnership, we can make a real difference.

Our strategy has six key priorities, which are linked to the outcomes within the Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland. These outcomes are often referred to as Pockets, Prospects and Places.

### National Outcomes

**Pockets** – Maximising financial resources of families on low incomes

**Prospects** – Improved life chances of children in poverty

**Places** – Children from low-income households live in well-designed, sustainable places

### Local priorities

The strategy is guided by six key priorities for tackling poverty in Renfrewshire:

**Income and employment** - Increase number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living

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

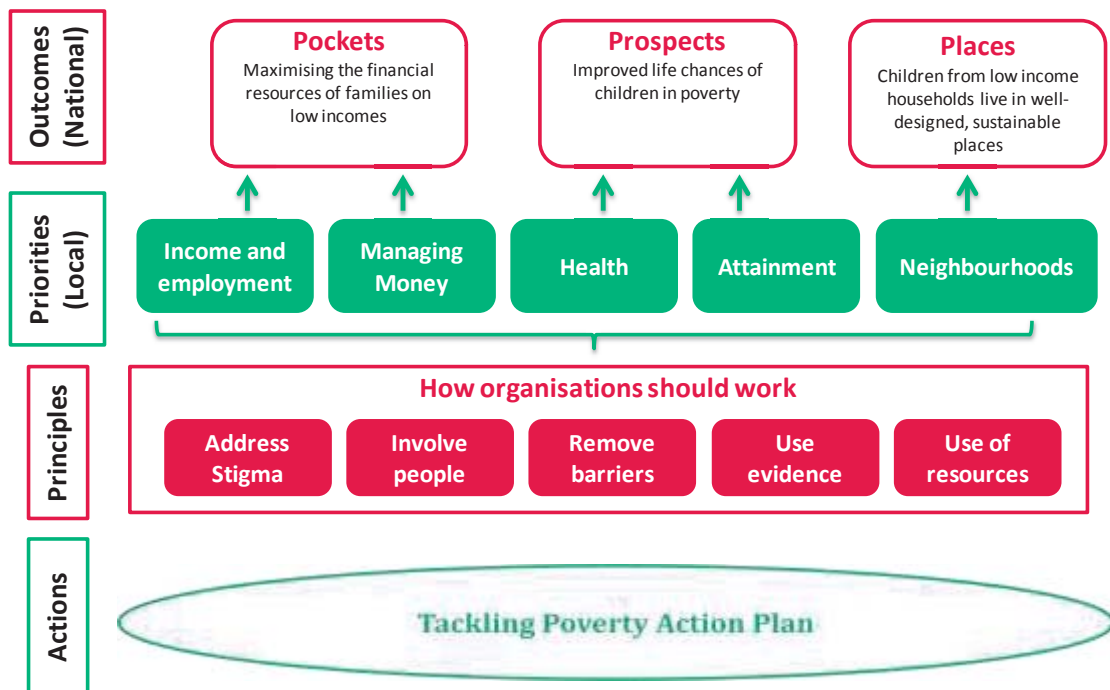
**Health** - Improve levels of physical and mental health of children in low income families

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

**Neighbourhoods** - Create neighbourhoods where people want to live and can afford to live

**How organisations should work** – Narrow inequalities by working in a way which is inclusive, effective and evidence-based

## Tackling Poverty Strategy: Our Approach





## Pockets – Maximising financial resources of families on low incomes

There are currently more families in poverty who are working than not working. In-work poverty is rising, and its being driven by low pay, unstable contracts and rises in the cost of living.

Welfare reforms are taking money out of the pockets of people in Renfrewshire, and further welfare reforms targeted at working-age people are likely to hit families even harder.

Major investments such as the City Deal and Paisley Town Centre Heritage and Asset Strategy will bring a real boost to Renfrewshire's economy, but we need to make sure they also deliver for local people living in poverty.

**Quote: 'Central to any strategy for tackling poverty is to maximise incomes, this is true to families both in and out of work' Poverty Alliance**

### Our Priorities

**Priority 1:** Increase the number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living.

**Priority 2:** Prevent financial crisis and support low income families to make the most of their money.

### What is already working well

We've already invested heavily in boosting Renfrewshire's economy, with a particular focus on improving youth employment rates through our **Invest in Renfrewshire** programme, which has made a real impact.

### Case study: Invest in Renfrewshire

Invest is an integrated economic development programme which aims to generate jobs, bridge the skills gap, and support business growth. Invest in Employability provides help and support to any unemployed person looking for work. The service aims to tackle poverty in the area through reducing unemployment and supporting local people to realise and fulfil their potential in employment. Invest has provided wage incentives to create an additional 882 new and additional paid posts (jobs, internships, apprenticeships and traineeships). Invest has also helped a further 2000 people (young people and adults) find wider employment opportunities and it continues to work with around 2000 job seekers each year.

We have refocused Invest in Renfrewshire to specifically address inequalities, extending our service to work with all ages and on key issues for tackling poverty such as in-work progression. We're also working more intensively with people who have more barriers to employment.

**Renfrewshire Council has been working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions** locally, in particular to prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit in Renfrewshire. We've put Income Advisers into all of the local Jobcentres to provide budgeting support, and we're one of two local authorities working with Department for Work and Pensions nationally on their response to the Oakley review on benefit sanctions.

We've been working hard to increase payment of the **Living Wage** across Renfrewshire, but we'll be doing more to encourage this across the Community Planning Partnership. We aim to take advantage of the changes being introduced by the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act to do more to leverage on procurement spend in support of our tackling poverty objectives.

We have a number of successful advice projects in Renfrewshire that are already making a huge difference to people living in poverty. We will extend advice projects which have received promising evaluations, such as **Healthier Wealthier Children** and **Energy Advice Renfrewshire**. We've also set up the **Advice Partnership Renfrewshire**, which includes a range of advice-giving organisations across Renfrewshire.

### **What we will do differently**

We will be looking at how we might be able to deliver more **flexible and affordable childcare** in Renfrewshire, and whether there might be other models of delivery that might better suit some low-income families.

We will be looking at how we build on the co-location work with the Department for Work and Pensions to avoid **benefit sanctions** and the harm these can cause.

We will make **advice** as easy to access as possible in Renfrewshire, making sure people who need advice can get appointments quickly and at a convenient place.

We will also be piloting new projects that support people to develop their **digital and financial skills**, and testing more innovative and sustainable ways of doing this work by involving people more closely in the design and delivery of the projects.

## Prospects – Improved life chances of children in poverty

Children from poorer families in Renfrewshire are getting an unfair start in life. The attainment gap in schools means poorer children often do less well at school than their more affluent peers. This 'gap' widens as children go through school, with fewer poorer children heading off to 'positive destinations' and ultimately, to better paid work.

**Quote: 'Growing up in poverty can have a huge impact on a child's future. Addressing the attainment gap in schools is critical to making sure children from low-income families are able to achieve their potential.'** Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission

There is also a large life expectancy gap in Renfrewshire, with a boy born in Bishopton living on average 16.4 years longer than a boy born in Ferguslie.

### Our priorities

**Priority 3:** Improve levels of physical and mental health of children in low income families

**Priority 4:** Close the educational attainment gap between children from low income families and their better off peers

### What is already working well

There has already been significant investment in supporting children's early years in Renfrewshire, most notably through our early years strategy **'Families First'**

**Case study: Families First is a family support programme. It started with two 'core teams', one in Ferguslie and one in Linwood – to help families build a better future for their children, with a focus on 0-8 years. The teams offer a support package that starts with staff building trust and quickly moves forward to helping the families achieve their potential. Some families have a key worker working very closely with them for months, while others come to drop-in sessions for a chat – and they know the teams are there if they need them. 371 families have been supported by Families First core teams, with £1million of income generated for local families**

We're expanding our Families First programme to add three new localities to our core team approach, in Johnstone, Foxbar and Gallowhill, based on the results of a successful evaluation from University of Glasgow.

It is essential that we promote good mental health and wellbeing for young people in Renfrewshire. We have successful **peer-mentoring** projects currently operating in two of our secondary schools, and we will be rolling that out across all of our schools. We will also be supporting that with arts, cultural and sports opportunities that improve health and wellbeing for young people.

### **What we will do differently**

We will invest £2 million to **address the attainment gap** in Renfrewshire. The primary focus of this work will be developing new approaches to teaching reading across Renfrewshire. We're also focusing on improving how we support parents to engage with their children's learning at school and at home.

We will set up a fund dedicated to supporting families with the **cost of the school day**, and we will work with young people to better understand the impacts of the cost of the school day on their learning.

We will set up a new joint team focussed on **positive destinations** that will make sure that young people from low-income households get the support they need to move on to work or further education that meets their aspirations and abilities, such as improving work experience opportunities.

## Places – Children from low income households live in well-designed, sustainable places

Changes to the housing landscape mean that more and more people are living in the private rented sector, but lack of regulation and standards within the sector means tenants have poorer security of tenure and little protection from escalating rents.

Many of Renfrewshire's communities continue to face deprivation despite significant investment in housing regeneration, with high turnover of tenancies and low demand for social housing in some areas. We believe that putting local people back in the driving seat is key to addressing some of these issues

**Quote: 'Power should be shared, with communities allowed to set their own priorities, and resources devolved to help them achieve them.' Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission**

### Our priority

**Priority 5:** Create neighbourhoods where people want to live, and can afford to live

### What is already working

**Street Stuff** is a successful partnership programme which provides activities for young people, and helps make communities feel safer.

**Case Study: Street Stuff is a youth engagement project celebrating its fifth year in operation and supported by Renfrewshire Council, St Mirren Football Club, Engage Renfrewshire, Scottish Fire and Rescue and Police Scotland. It works with children and young people in their own communities, through the deployment of resources, including football pitches and shipping containers with various equipment (games consoles, dance mats, exercise equipment)**

Here are some of the 'headlines':

- Reduction in anti-social behaviour and low-level offending across the local authority by 75% since 2009
- Street Stuff has won 13 awards and been recognised in the Scottish Parliament as a model of best practice
- Average annual attendance figures of 20,000 children and young people since 2009
- 96 sessions delivered 6 nights per week, 52 weeks of the year
- 200 young people have become volunteer coaches, with 15 securing employment through the programme

Shelter Scotland has launched an innovative new project in Renfrewshire called **Foundations First**, which aims to support families at risk of homelessness across the range of tenures. This project embodies many of the principles of the Renfrewshire

Tackling Poverty Commission, such as co-production and community capacity building.

### **What we will do differently**

We will pilot **asset-based approaches** to regeneration by introducing ‘community builders’ into communities to build networks and encourage communities to set their own priorities and support them to build their capacity. We’d like to do this in an area where we already have some planned physical regeneration activity and devolve some money out to communities.

We will increase enforcement of **private rented sector** landlords, to improve the housing standards for tenants. We will also be working with social landlords across Renfrewshire to make sure that **social housing rents** are fair and affordable.

We will be offering a range of **volunteering and work experience** opportunities in community safety and in partnership with the police, to give young people a chance to improve their employability while helping to keep their communities safe.

## Principles – How organisations should work

The Commission made a set of recommendations around how organisations should work, which are the key principles of how the Tackling Poverty Strategy will be delivered.

**Quote: ‘It’s not just what you do that’s important; it’s also how you do it’**  
**Renfrewshire’s Tackling Poverty Commission**

### **Our priority**

**Priority 6:** Narrow inequalities by working in a way which is inclusive, effective and evidence-based

### **Address Stigma**

We all have a responsibility to challenge the stigma associated with poverty, but the Commission’s engagement with citizens was particularly challenging around how we address stigma within our own organisations.

**Quote: “Everyone felt blamed. A feeling of ‘eye rolling’ and ‘you again’”**  
**Participant, Star Project**

We will be launching a campaign to tackle stigma, which will initially be targeted at staff members across the Council and Community Planning Partnership.

### **Involve People**

It’s clear that services designed without people who have direct experience of poverty often fail to meet their needs. In particular, the Commission recommended co-production and peer support as models for Community Planning Partnership work moving forward.

We will continue the engagement approach of the Commission throughout the life of the Strategy and Action Plan, in particular working with third sector organisations as facilitators for conversations with the community.

### **Remove barriers**

It’s important that we remove the barriers to accessing our services, and people told us that even some of our free and universally available services have barriers that we aren’t aware of.

We will be introducing poverty into our impact assessment process to make sure the services we design and deliver are accessible, appropriate and meet people’s needs.

## **Use evidence**

It's important that the decisions that we make are evidence based, but we want to make sure that we use evidence wisely. We've identified in our strategy and action plan which activities are proven, and which are promising.

We will robustly monitor and evaluate our action plan, and make the details of performance and evaluations widely available.

## **Use of resources**

In a time of shrinking budgets and increasing demand, it's important that we make the most of our combined resources to have the most impact.

We will pilot work across the Community Planning Partners to better understand our collective spend on tackling poverty across all of our service areas, and look at opportunities for joint resourcing.

## **Case Study: Digital Strategy**

**Increasing digital participation is a key part of our approach to tackling poverty. We will be developing a new digital strategy for Renfrewshire, with digital participation at the core, focussing on how we can improve access to technology and internet and support people to build their digital skills. We will initially target those who face the most barriers; people living in poverty, disabled people and older people.**

**Our digital participation plan embodies many of the principles of our tackling poverty strategy, for example:**

- **The digital participation plan was designed in close consultation with local people, and citizens will form a central part of the reference group as the plan is delivered.**
- **It addresses stigma and removes barriers by ensuring that digital access and training is located in accessible locations which are used by target groups. Person centred support will be provided to trained staff using accessible technology.**
- **The digital participation plan will develop and pilot new approaches, evaluate success locally and feed into a national digital skills framework to provide a coordinated, consistent approach to measuring digital participation across Renfrewshire.**



## Delivering the strategy

The Tackling Poverty in Renfrewshire programme is owned by the Community Planning Partnership. This is essential to make sure that the Strategy and Action Plan are delivered in true partnership.

**Quote: Tackling poverty is everyone's responsibility. The Council, its Community Planning Partners and wider organisations such as employers and housing providers, will need to work in partnership on shared priorities and deliver real leadership around anti-poverty practice in Renfrewshire and beyond.**

A Tackling Poverty Steering Group has been set up which comprises senior officers across the Council and Community Planning Partners. This group will meet quarterly and will drive the delivery of the Tackling Poverty Action Plan.

Tackling poverty is a long-term aspiration, and cannot be achieved in the next two years. The focus of our Strategy and Action Plan will be to build a more robust evidence base for the anti-poverty impact of the work we are already doing, and to test the new approaches recommended by the Commission. This will allow us to produce a long-term, evidence-based and sustainable approach to tackling poverty in 2017.

The Community Planning Partnership will report annually on its progress implementing Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission's recommendations and the success of the Tackling Poverty Action Plan.

## Measuring Success

Measuring poverty can often be challenging, as there are many different ways of measuring levels of poverty. Often these measures are not collected regularly, and are only available nationally. It is also predicted that child poverty levels in Scotland may start to rise again, and many of the reasons for this (such as UK welfare reform) are out of Renfrewshire's control.

We will monitor a range of measures that give us a more responsive picture of poverty in Renfrewshire, by looking at key causes and impacts locally as well as poverty levels themselves. We believe this is a more practical approach than adopting a single measure or target.

We will produce a "Poverty in Renfrewshire" dashboard quarterly, which will highlight key national and local poverty measures. This will help us to understand whether poverty is getting better or worse across Renfrewshire. It will also be aligned to the Scottish Child Poverty Measurement Framework.

A key part of our strategy is assessing how effective the Tackling Poverty Action Plan. We will closely measure the impact of our activities, and learn lessons about what works.

Many of the activities in our action plan have been proven to be successful, such as Families First and Street Stuff, and have already had robust external evaluations. These evaluations will continue to assess the success of these projects.

There are also activities within our action plan which test new approaches which appear promising, such as our plans around developing new approaches to teaching reading. These will be robustly evaluated to get better evidence about their impact, investing in external evaluations from subject-matter experts such as the University of Strathclyde.

It's essential that local people have a role in defining the success of this work, and the role of people's stories and voices cannot be underestimated. We have continued the engagement approach of the Commission, and these relationships and conversations are an essential part of the work going forward.