

To: Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee

On: 13 November 2024

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Fairer Renfrewshire Programme Update

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Council and partners have a key focus on tackling inequality and improving wellbeing and have longstanding programmes of work and partnership arrangements in place such as the Tackling Poverty Programme and the change programme established in response to the findings of the Renfrewshire Drug and Alcohol Commission.
- 1.2. At Council on 2 March 2023 members reaffirmed their commitment to the Fairer Renfrewshire programme and outlined a number of investments including bringing together the current Fairer Renfrewshire funding alongside the Tackling Poverty and Social Renewal reserve funds into a single resource.
- 1.3. At Council on 29th February 2024, members further reaffirmed their commitment to the Fairer Renfrewshire programme with further investments in a number of targeted interventions including additional welfare rights funding, a targeted programme of summer activities for children and young people from low-income families, additional resource to explore inequalities experienced by older people and strengthen engagement with young people, and a further winter school clothing payment in 2024.
- 1.4. Work on priorities has continued with this paper containing updates on a number of key priorities at Section 4.

2. Recommendations

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

3. Background

- 3.1 As highlighted in Section 1, the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme brings together a number of existing programmes of work focused on achieving fairness and equity, including the former Tackling Poverty Programme and Alcohol and Drugs Change Programme. These programmes are being brought together alongside the Council's Social Renewal Plan, mapping a fairer future for Renfrewshire's residents through the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.
- 3.2 There are four key emerging themes which are shared across all elements of the Fairer Renfrewshire programme, and these are:
- Improving financial security
 - Advancing equality of opportunity
 - Building community capacity and resilience
 - Listening to lived experience

4. Fairer Renfrewshire Programme Updates

Winter Connections 2024/25

- 4.1 At Leadership Board in May 2024, it was agreed that £75,000 of funding be allocated from Fairer Renfrewshire programme to provide small grants to local organisations to support a Winter Connections programme in partnership with local organisations. The programme aims to encourage people to connect and participate in activities in warm and welcoming spaces across communities in Renfrewshire.
- 4.2 The funding will support local community and voluntary organisations with the additional costs of making venues, activities and sessions open as part of the programme, such as equipment, food, energy costs, and rent.
- 4.3 Funded activities must 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
- 4.4 The fund opened to applications on 23 September and was quickly over-subscribed. The fund was closed on 11 October to general applications after attracting 42 bids totalling £79,488. Currently these are being scrutinised by a panel made up from Renfrewshire Council, Renfrewshire HSCP and Engage Renfrewshire and recommendations being made around approval.

- 4.5 The fund this year has attracted applications with a good geographical spread, with many of the villages represented as well as most areas of Paisley including Gallowhill, Renfrew, Johnstone and Linwood. Applications have also been made from organisation providing support from those in recovery from drugs and alcohol as well as those with mental health issues.
- 4.6 Details of the first awards made under delegated authority are detailed at Appendix 1. Further information will be provided at the next Sub-Committee and, as with previous years, information about all funded activities will be captured on one webpage on the Council website and posters promoting activities circulated. A pack providing posters, period products and leaflets about other available supports will be provided for organisations taking part. This year, this will include information/promotional material about claiming Pension Credit as part of our campaign to encourage claims.

School Support and Family Advice Service

- 4.7 With the new school year having started in August, work has been ongoing with colleagues in Advice Works and Education as well as Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau (RCAB) to boost numbers using the School Support Service across Secondary and ASN schools provided by RCAB and the Family Advice Service for families of Primary and ELCC schools provided by Advice Works.
- 4.8 Engagement with Education Managers has continued and all head teachers have been sent information about the services. A public campaign is also planned. RCAB post information about the schools they will be visiting each week on their own social media to promote their service and engagement will continue throughout the year to ensure relevant school and nursery staff, including pastoral staff are aware of the services and can signpost or refer parents who may benefit from advice around money and benefits.
- 4.9 As previously reported, Advice Works have embedded a question about whether families need support with money as a part of the application process for Free School Meals and School Clothing grants. Any applicant who indicated they wanted support received an email immediately with information on financial supports available for families, where to access help with money and a link to Advice Works online referral form. One reminder was sent if no contact had been made, again including a link to the online form again and reminding them that help is available. Of 300 applicants who received the email in the last tranche, 24 self-referred to Advice Works and a further 200 emails are set to be sent in November. The income generated from those cases to date is £12,206.
- 4.10 This quarter the Family Advice service has seen 80 parents or carers, bringing the total for the year so far to 183. Of these 167 have fitted into at least one Child Poverty Priority Group. Client Financial gain at present is £45,925.
- 4.11 Between August 16th and October 17th, 2024, the School Support Service assisted 38 clients. The most popular advice areas were benefits and housing. During this period there were also two clients who booked an appointment and didn't attend. For this period the School Support service recorded financial gains for clients totalling £15,779.

Winter Clothing Grant

- 4.12 At Council on 29 February 2024, members approved a Winter Clothing Grant of £50 to be paid for each child eligible for School Clothing Grant in Winter 2024, allocating £300,000 for this purpose.
- 4.13 The payment was made directly to parents' bank account week commencing 28th October. The payment was made for 5,076 children, with a final total funding allocation of £253,800.
- 4.14 The payment had been trailed through social media posts from September, ensuring the maximum number of parents were aware, and applied for School Clothing Grant to allow them to receive this payment.

Lived Experience Panel

- 4.15 Elected Members have been given a number of updates relating to work of the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel. Early September saw the Panel Event with Panel members, elected members and council officers in attendance along with HSCP and Engage Renfrewshire. A report of the event has been produced and attached as an appendix to this paper.
- 4.16 In October, the panel took part in the Events Strategy consultation and a walkabout of the Halloween site takes place on 24 October. The 30th October sees the Panel starting a piece of work commissioned by Renfrewshire HSCP, around the findings of their most recent Health and Wellbeing Survey, feeding back on the findings and helping identify priorities from the results.

Community Needs Assessment in Gallowhill

- 4.17 As previously reported to the sub-committee, late in 2023, Renfrewshire HSCP was successful in a funding bid to NHSGGC Public Health to carry out a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) in Gallowhill, recognising the concerning increase in Child Poverty rates in the Gallowhill and Renfrew South Ward. The CNA, being carried out by Active Communities, commenced at the start of July 2024 using the Place Standard Tool and 250 responses have been received to mid-October.
- 4.18 Early indications are that transport is a major concern in the area. Active Communities have also found a lack of engagement from local people and families to any activities being held locally, with families travelling from outwith the local area and sometime outwith Renfrewshire to take part in activities in Gallowhill.
- 4.19 As was reported to elected members at the last sub-committee, an application was made to the Scottish Government Child Poverty Accelerator Fund to support the testing of new place-based approaches to child poverty in Renfrewshire, which would be informed by the CNA currently taking place. This joint bid with Renfrewshire HSCP, NHSGGC and Active Communities, with Renfrewshire Council being the lead partner was unfortunately unsuccessful.
- 4.20 Analysis shows Gallowhill has a high density of lone parents, households with a disabled adult or child and larger families (3 or more children). Recent census data and anecdotal evidence indicates that ethnicity and migration may also be an important factor in the increased rates. This

initial analysis will be augmented by the CNA and we expect that this will provide critical community insights, to support targeted work in the area.

- 4.21 While awaiting the CNA results we are ensuring some supports are available in Gallowhill. Home-Start have introduced a Family Outreach Group to support families in the area, funded through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund. In addition, Winter Connections funding has been allocated towards groups in the area and Renfrewshire Affordable Credit Alliance organised a community breakfast on 8 November as their annual Talk Money Week Event.
- 4.22 In conjunction with services and partners such as Advice Works, Invest In Renfrewshire, Digital Champions, Social Security Scotland, St Mirren and Skoobmobile, residents were invited to have free breakfast and activities and find out about available supports, including Pension Credit and Scottish benefits. As part of the events, residents were also encouraged to complete a Community Needs Assessment survey with Active Communities to ensure a range of voices were heard.

Digital

- 4.23 Elected members may remember from the presentation by the Digital Strategy Deliver Manager at the last Sub-Committee that work was ongoing to establish DigiZones across Renfrewshire as places where individuals who may be digitally excluded could come to get online, access a digital device or receive digital skills support. Digizones have been developed through the Citizens Voice Forum which seeks to co-design digital inclusion solutions by taking a person-centred and place-based approach and by working with organisations involved in delivering digital inclusion as well as those impacted by digital exclusion.
- 4.24 The DigiZone early implementer phase has been launched on 16 October, during Get Online Week with all Renfrewshire Libraries becoming DigiZones as well as a number of Community Learning and Development/Youth Services locations and one 3rd sector partner – Active Communities. Details of venues are here www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/digizones
- 4.25 Learning from this phase will be used to help shape and inform future rollout and the DigiZone sub-group of Citizens Voice will continue to oversee and promote this initiative.

Pension Credit campaign

- 4.26 As previously reported to the Sub-Committee, the UK Government has announced that older adults of state pensionable age in England and Wales not in receipt of Pension Credit (PC) or other means tested benefits will no longer be entitled to Winter Fuel Payment (WFP). On 14th August, the Scottish Government announced that the payment in Scotland will also be restricted to those on eligible benefits.
- 4.27 The DWP are planning to directly contact 120,000 pensioner households by letter from 1 November, who have been identified from Housing Benefit data as potentially eligible for, but not

claiming Pension Credit. Each household will be invited to apply for Pension Credit before 21 December, which is the last date for making a successful backdated claim and still receive a WFP.

- 4.28 Work has been ongoing locally too to encourage application to Pension Credit. While awaiting further detail on this payment, Advice Works and Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau (RCAB), along with Corporate Communications, delivered a Pension Credit take up campaign, with specific appointments for older adults being offered during a benefit take-up week to ensure as many of those eligible in Renfrewshire who have not yet claimed this benefit do so.
- 4.29 A round table meeting was held on 2 October 2024 to discuss options for the Council and partners to promote Pension Credit take-up locally. Attendees included several Council Officers from assorted services including Corporate Communications, HSCP, RCAB, Engage Renfrewshire and ROAR. Work is ongoing to develop a Council targeted letter campaign using Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction data and investigate the possibility of organising a text campaign using GP surgery patient records. Scheduling of this work will take cognisance of the resources and capability of Advice Works and RCAB.
- 4.30 It was also noted during the meeting, that successful engagement with those aged 66 or over may also require face-to-face discussions from trusted partners in community locations throughout Renfrewshire, encouraging conversations about money and the benefits of getting a free benefit check. Attendees agreed to work in partnership, with those offering a client facing service undertaking to speak to their clients about Pension Credit.
- 4.31 Council Officers have undertaken a communications campaign promoting Pension Credit take-up via social media posts, press releases and internal communications. Flyers and posters have also been designed targeting both those that are aged 66 or over, and those that know someone of pension age, encouraging calling either Advice Works or RCAB for a benefit check. The draft wording and layout of the posters and flyers was amended following feedback received from attendees and stakeholders during a community Cost of Living Event held at Southend Action Centre on 8 October. The feedback was especially welcomed from those who attended who do not speak English as a first language, and from those that come from, or assist those, from an ethnic minority.
- 4.32 The flyers and posters will be distributed to multiple locations across the area including libraries, health centres, sheltered housing complexes, GP surgeries, community centres, third sector organisations and shops. Pop-up events are also being arranged to generate face-to face discussions in the community.
- 4.33 Initial figures from Advice Works have been encouraging with 284 adults over 65 coming forward for a benefit check in the period 1 August to 15 October, compared to 197 in the previous period. Although many of those coming forward have been found not to be entitled to Pension credit, a benefit check has identified other supports, with applications made in particular for adult disability benefits.

Implications of the Report

1. Financial – There are no financial implications associated with this report.
2. HR & Organisational Development – none
3. Community/Council Planning – The Fairer Renfrewshire Programme is a key driver in achieving the ‘Fair’ strategic outcome and theme within the Council Plan, and covers a number of the key actions identified in the plan. It also represents a significant partnership programme of work which supports the ‘Fair’ theme within the Community Plan, with dedicated partnership governance being established to ensure alignment between these areas of work.
4. Legal - none
5. Property/Assets - none
6. Information Technology - none
7. Equality and Human Rights – Equality and human rights are a key pillar of this plan, and it is anticipated that the programme will likely advance equality of opportunity.
8. Health and Safety - none
9. Procurement – none
10. Risk – none
11. Privacy Impact – none
12. Climate risk – none
13. Children’s rights - the articles within UNCRC underpin the work that is being progressed in Renfrewshire through the Fairer Renfrewshire programme, particularly in relation to rights in relation to aspects such as life, survival and development, food, clothing and a safe home and supporting the best interests of the child and their families. Child poverty and family wellbeing are key local partnership priorities.
14. COSLA Policy Position – none

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Appendix 1

Winter Connections 2024/25 – First batch of approvals

Organisation	Area	Purpose	Funding proposed for approval
Brick Lane Music Academy	Paisley	Soup and a Jam will run on Wednesdays from 1pm to 3.30pm and is specifically targeted at those in recovery, isolated or struggling with everyday mental health issues who have an aptitude or desire to create music or play in a band. The project will include a soup lunch, access to warm studios and rehearsal rooms for 2 hours every Wednesday and rehearsing in a band with newfound friends. Instruments are available for use free of charge too. The project will run from November 2024 for 14 weeks until the end of February 2025. .	£2,000
Erskine Arts	Erskine	Soup Sessions will run on Fridays from 11am to 1pm from 1 November 2024 to 28 March 2025 and will offer a choice of freshly made and healthy soups and bread, tea, coffee, and biscuits. Attendees will also enjoy company from others and staff and volunteers, many of whom are young people. Food and music go hand in hand so they will play music that can conjure stories, memories, and chats with those who attend.	£2,000
Foxbar Elderly Forum	Paisley	Foxbar Elderly Forum will provide activities such as bingo, board games and indoor bowling as well as hot food for around 50 older adults on a Monday 1-3.30pm at Foxbar Community Centre. The project will run from 7 October 2024 to 3 March 2025.	£2,000
Friends of Howwood Park	Howwood	The Tuesday Club will run from 18 November 2024 to 31 March 2025 on Tuesdays from 11am to 1pm and support 80 older adults. The club will run in the Pavilion, a building which the group has taken on as an asset transfer and now use as a 'hub' for activities for local people. Although the club is aimed at older people, anyone would be welcome. There will be a different activity every week including bingo, quizzes, watching a short movie, talks from various people, sing-a-longs etc. followed by hot food such as sausage rolls, pies etc, hot drinks and biscuits.	£2,000
Johnstone Dementia Friendly Community Group	Johnstone	Still Here will provide activities and lunch for older people on a Wednesday and Friday from 1-3pm at Johnstone Town Hall. Activities will include word games, quizzes, group puzzles, music, and bingo. Every second week there will be two musicians, a folk musician, and a popular music singer. Funding will enable them to continue running the project providing food and activity throughout the winter. The Dementia Friendly group are part of an intergenerational project bringing P7 pupils together with older people and sharing different tastes in music and songs.	£2,000

		The group welcomes people from Johnstone, Linwood, Elderslie, Howwood, Kilbarchan, Houston/Crosslee, Bridge of Weir/Brookfield. The project will run from 1 October 2024 to 1 April 2025.	
Just Dive In CIC	Paisley	Winter Warmth and Wellbeing: Crafting, Floating, and Swimming for Older Adults will provide activities including knitting, painting, and making holiday decorations along with Floating Therapy and light swimming which helps alleviate chronic pain and promotes relaxation. Participants will be provided with warm drinks and snacks. Activities are aimed at reducing isolation, improving wellbeing, and connecting participants with services. The project will run on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10am to 6pm from 1 November 2024 to 31 March 2025 and will support approximately 100 older adults throughout the course of the project, focussing on older adults who may be experiencing social isolation, mobility challenges, or mental health issues.	£2,000
Kairos Women+	Paisley	Community Soup will support the continuation of the Community Soup group, offering a 2-hour 'café style' environment for women+ to access a free hot meal, a small community pantry and free shop as well as access to specialist services for support over the winter period. There would be a key service visiting the space monthly, for example, Citizens Advice, Home Energy Scotland, Social Security Scotland, and access weekly to an Information Hub. 15-20 different women+ attend each week, including women+ with learning disabilities and around half of participants are disabled in some way. They will share cooking tips and provide supplies to take home such as herb planting and spice stations as well as equip those without cooking equipment with a slow cooker. This group also supports the Breastfeeding Support Group by providing free hot meals to new mum's and connections between them. The group will run from 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025 on Tuesdays from 12.30-2.30pm.	£2,000
Paisley North Church of Scotland	Paisley	Wednesday Drop In Group will run from 9.30 to 11.30am on a Wednesday and 12 noon to 2pm on a Friday at the Tannahill Community Centre. The Drop In is open to anyone. They offer breakfast rolls, hot meals and activities including pool and darts. The project will run from 6 November 2024 to 26 March 2025 and will support between 4 and 15 adults, men and women aged from 30's to 50's.	£1,000
Paisley YMCA	Paisley	Cosy Crafts @ The Y will be a free weekly crafting and making club for adults in Renfrewshire running on a Tuesday from 11am to 2pm from 5 November 2024 to 8 April 2025. The YMCA's digital makerspace offers access to a range of technology	£2,000

		<p>from 3D Printers, a heat press, a vinyl cutter, and lots of crafting and making resources.</p> <p>Cosy Crafts aims to provide adults with a space where they can meet and connect with other people and take part in activities which will positively contribute to their wellbeing. They hope to support 40-50 adults through this project.</p>	
Ralston Primary OSC	Paisley	<p>Winter Drama Club and Show will provide a weekly drama group for primary aged children for 10 weeks on a Wednesday from 3pm to 5pm, culminating in a show that parents and local people will be invited to see. The project will run from 6 January to 24 March 2025. There will be drama games and they will work towards a scripted show with costumes. The club will run from the hall at Ralston Primary and children will be offered a variety of snacks and drinks. There are spaces for up to 30 children at the club and up to 100 parents and family members at the show.</p>	£2,000
Rays of Hope	Elderslie	<p>HOPE Project will run from 13 September 2024 to 31 March 2025 from 10am to 3pm every Friday and once a month on a Wednesday. It will provide cooking demonstrations along with information on nutrition and healthy eating from a chef as well as craft classes including Christmas crafts. There will also be a Pilates class for all ages and 1:1 advice should anyone have any difficulties. Hot food (homemade soup and bread) with tea and coffee will also be provided.</p>	£2,000
Renfrew Trinity Church	Renfrew	<p>Lite Bites @ Renfrew Trinity aims to provide a monthly lite bites lunch to people in the local community on a Saturday from 12-1pm. This would consist of cup-a-soup, sandwiches, sausage rolls, cakes, biscuits, tea, coffee, juice. Activities will include board games, puzzles and colouring sheets.</p>	£1,150
Renfrewshire Rainbow Buddies	Paisley	<p>Shortroods Youth Club will run from the Beechwood Community Centre on Tuesdays from 17.50 to 19.45 from 22 October 2024 to 25 March 2025. The youth club is aimed at young people in P1-P7, including care experienced young people, refugees, and young people from low-income families. There are also 10 spaces for young people in S1-S3 to obtain a Saltire award for volunteering. Activities will include sports and a service that can provide mental wellbeing/ cooking sessions with the young people.</p>	£2,000
ROAR Connections for Life	Johnstone	<p>Jam Jar Movies at Station Seven has run for the last two winters on a Friday 12.30 to 3.30pm and gets a regular attendance of over 30 service users. Attendees enjoy a film, interval quiz and hot beverages and food in a hall equipped at Station Seven to show movies. This will support adults predominantly over 82 years of age from 6 December 2024 to 28 March 2025.</p>	£2,000
STAR Project	Paisley	<p>STAR Winter Connections will take place on Tuesdays from 12 November 2024 to 18 March 2025 from 6-8pm and will provide alternate activities each week with either a craft activity to complete together or games/quizzes. Prizes for the games/quizzes will be practical and take the form of food/essential items for people to take home. The craft sessions will have a practical application, such as making</p>	£2,000

		your own Christmas gifts or wrapping paper. Community members will have access to charge their phones, tablets, laptops. STAR will also increase the opening hours of Pantry Plus so that individuals who may usually be working during the day have the same access to low-cost foods as everyone else.	
The Thursday Club	Paisley	Thursday Club will provide a hot lunch to all the Thursday Club members and anyone who wishes to come along every Thursday from 12.30 to 2pm from 31 October 2024 to 27 February 2025. They will also deliver activities. They aim to support around 95 people each week at Saint Peters Men's Club in Glenburn.	£2,000
Twist and Hit Cheerleaders	Paisley	Winter Youth Club will run from Covault Business Centre on a Saturday evening from 7 to 9pm from 9 November 2024 to 22 February 2025. This is a youth club for young people aged 5-18 years where they will receive warm snacks and drinks and a range of activities including: Inflatables; Dance/Gymnastics Activities; Football/Rounders; Games Consoles; Arts & Crafts; Parkour Style Fun Sessions. They aim to support up to 70 young people.	£2,000



Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel Event

Summary and evaluation report

October 2024

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1. Introduction from the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel

The Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel brings together members with experience of various forms of disadvantage and unfairness, with poverty a recurring and linking theme. Members also have experience of being consulted on changes to their communities and lives with little impact and of having aspirations stated without determination of the steps required to realise them.

The Panel has welcomed what has always appeared a sincere determination to make Renfrewshire fairer.

The Panel has met with several groups of Officers engaged in work for, or in partnership with, Renfrewshire Council, including being informed and consulted about employability, events, Council Tax collection, summer holiday provision, digital inclusion services, school meals provision and the new transport strategy approach.

The Panel has found this work positive and encouraging and has met with the Convenor and Depute of the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee as well as senior officers working within the Fairer Renfrewshire remit and some service managers who have all listened to the Panel.

However, the Panel has remained critical that consultations were about discrete operations rather than the larger picture of fairness and its lack in Renfrewshire. The Panel believes consultations should not happen in silos and that coordinated work must be undertaken to analyse the bigger picture of the lack of fairness in Renfrewshire.

To work towards addressing these criticisms, the Panel collaborated with senior members of the Partnerships and Inequalities team to organise an event with various members of Council staff and Councillors in an event in early September designed to achieve:

- better understanding of the work to date, achievements, and ambitions for a fairer Renfrewshire
- identification of key Individual Actions/Decisions which will support the work; and
- identification of key external partners to recruit to the overall effort, to help towards the development of a strategic Fairer Renfrewshire Plan.

The event took place on 3rd September in Johnstone Town Hall and was attended by Panel members, STAR Project team members, elected members from the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee, Council officers and the Chief Executive and Community and Partnership Manager from Engage Renfrewshire.

2. Summary of the themes discussed

The event was set up around table discussions, with tables having a mix of Panel members, Elected Members and Council Officers from across services. After hearing from the Panel members at each table, the tables took part in two activities:

1. Each person was asked to complete the sentence, 'Renfrewshire will look fairer when...' and discuss responses as a table, and
2. Each person was asked to note what key contribution they or their service could make towards a fairer Renfrewshire, again followed by a table discussion on responses. Attendees were also asked to identify who needs to be involved in collective effort to make Renfrewshire fairer.

2.1. Activity 1 - "Renfrewshire will look fairer when...?"

Responses around Renfrewshire looking fairer covered some main areas:

- Everyone having affordable warmth and food security
- Everyone having access to decent, affordable housing and being able to be proud of their home and the area they live
- Access to services and activities, including activities for children, being fair and equitable. This includes for New Scots who face additional barriers to accessing information about services and resources.
- People being involved in decision making at the start and empowered to contribute and enact change

'Communication between decision makers and residents is open, respectful and progressive'

- Better more affordable public transport that meets residents needs to travel around and beyond Renfrewshire
- Everyone being trauma informed, mindful of different life experience and stigma being removed

'Every person counts – no one is 'just' anything'

A number of themes or discussion points came out through the table discussions:

Housing, with Council and Housing Associations having a part to play to contribute to a fairer Renfrewshire. The lack of a Renfrewshire-wide strategic overview of housing across the area was discussed as well as how housing affects family, safety and, educational attainment and health and wellbeing.

ParentPay and **School meals**, with a lack of information for parents and carers being highlighted. New Scots in particular are unsure of their entitlement to free school meals. Digital Champions were also suggested as a solution for helping understanding of Parentpay.

Good **Communication** between the Council and public is vital, with the Council understanding and overcoming the barriers there can be to communication, including to New Scots, ethnically diverse communities and because of stigma. The Council was also urged to share good news stories.

Benefit rules are difficult to understand, there can be stigma and misinformation preventing people from coming forward to claim. How do we communicate about benefit changes? Schools could be used.

Transport was discussed, especially the cost of buses and the Council supporting community bus services. Improvements for wheelchair users to get around are needed.

Racism is an issue affecting families, and the Council should show real action around this, including on racism within schools. Policies on racism need to be more accessible.

Many **New Scots** have No Recourse to Public Funds and are living in hardship, and don't have information about supports that are available in the area. Family pressures from back home can also add strain for New Scots. There are differences between families coming from different countries, e.g. African countries and Ukraine.

Working together, either within different services in the Council or with external organisation and 3rd sector partners is needed to make Renfrewshire fairer. The Council can't do it alone.

Strategic **Planning** across the Council needs to reflect Fairer Renfrewshire priorities and the Council should be more ambitious about making Renfrewshire fairer. The voice of lived experience should be heard and embedded in policies and the Council should check back with people to ensure the policy is working. EQIAs need to be real not based on assumptions.

2.2. Activity 2 – Summary of Key Contributions by Services

Because of the number of services involved in the event, the key contributions identified by attendees were varied. Overall most services stated a desire to start to work or continue working with the Panel to inform their work. Apart from more generally arranging to consult with the Panel, services mentioned involving the Panel in planning campaigns and looking at things like communications as well as helping establish barriers to access and engagement in services as specific actions. A number of services made commitments to involve the Panel in developing and implementing plans and strategies, such as developing Renfrewshire's Food Plan and delivery of the Plan for Net Zero. Working better across Council services, not just with the Panel was also a theme.

More specific issues were raised such as ParentPay and school meals. A number of issues were raised around ensuring parents were better informed about ParentPay use, as well as about menus, recipes and knowing meals are cooked from scratch. **Environment Housing and Infrastructure** agreed to produce a parent pack on school meals services for P1 and S1, including ParentPay use, School Meals. There was also a commitment to offer careers in facilities management, including to school leavers and through supporting Project Search which helps people with additional needs to get into/back into work.

From the point of view of **Digital**, a commitment was given to think about those who aren't online as well as support those who are currently digitally excluded. Increasing online access through DigiZones and the digital champion network, as well as better promotion of social tariffs and charities connected SIM cards.

Invest in Renfrewshire will continue to support people to move into and sustain employment, ensuring the service supports people from ALL backgrounds and is non-judgemental. They also commit to working across Council Services to create more opportunities. **Advice Works** had good results in attracting and retaining staff members through working with Invest, and they will continue to use the service.

Social Work committed to gaining a better understanding of the range of supports within Renfrewshire as well as examining their approachability as a service.

Through their different roles, Engage Renfrewshire will encourage Community Leaders to participate in fora that can have impact and support positive change as

well as continue to promote the importance of co-production to change making (co-production, co-delivery, co-evaluation, co-development).

Recognising that free events in Renfrewshire have a cost, with stalls, rides etc, **Events** committed to continue working with the Panel and use input gained to target specific groups to provide free access/snacks etc in a non-stigmatising way.

The **Partnerships and Inequalities** team will maximise cross service work through the Fairer Renfrewshire Officers Group and increase awareness of the Panel throughout the Council. They will connect the equalities and migration workstreams to New Scots and the Panel and use lived experience to shape actions, plans and strategies.

With barriers and fairness in Council communications raised as an issue, **Communications** will challenge services around consultations to ensure they are done fairly and will challenge their team to ensure communication channels are fair for all.

Renfrewshire HSCP will pursue the 'Housing as a Health Issue' priority that was previously identified and try to ensure all agencies work together to support better housing. They have also committed to work with the Panel on the Health and Wellbeing survey to develop a community response and identify things we can do to make a real difference to health inequalities.

One Ren will revisit KPIs and what information they collect - what's useful and what they're measuring ensuring accountability (not a tick box exercise). They will also look at poverty proofing activity.

The **Faire Renfrewshire Panel** will continue to make their voices heard, promote and deliver activities around Dignity and encourage further development towards a Fairer Renfrewshire Plan with active contribution from all partners needed for an effective plan.

We had asked who else needed to be involved to make Renfrewshire fairer. Apart from Senior managers within the Council and Council Services, the following were identified:

- **Housing Organisations/Housing Associations (very important)**
- **Community Planning Partners, HSCP, Police, Fire, DWP**
- **Third Sector**
- **Local Partnerships**

- Other Local Authority Lived Experience Panels
- Mental Health Services
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Transport Providers

3. Panel thoughts about the event

The Panel found the event positive and thought that it achieved its aims with those who attended, which has been confirmed by evaluation responses from participants.

Individuals committed to specific actions they could take towards making Renfrewshire fairer and to working with the Panel and other lived experience groups to inform work to realise this aim. This demonstrates a greater understanding of the Tackling Poverty team's and Panels' Fairer Renfrewshire work. We identified external agencies which need to be involved in the work, which demonstrates recognition of the need for wider involvement in the development of an inclusive strategic plan to make Renfrewshire fairer.

The Panel feels that a subsequent event needs to be held which involves more Council departments, key external partners and community-led services. This event should discuss a draft Fairer Renfrewshire plan which includes all these stakeholders, with a view to both strengthening the draft and determining wider contributions made in partnership with the Council.

4. Evaluation

An evaluation of the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel event was conducted after the session. All attendees were asked to complete a feedback survey, allowing them to share their thoughts on the event. The feedback received has been very positive.

The first objective set out by the Panel for the event was to allow partners to better understand the work of the Panel to date and their achievements and ambitions. 100% of respondents agreed that this was achieved. One respondent's main takeaway from the event was that they left having a *“greater awareness and understanding of the work of the Panel and importance of involving members from the outset when developing or redesigning services.”*

All respondents agreed that the Panel achieved their second objective which was around identifying individual actions and decisions to support the work of the Panel.

Every attendee was asked to note one thing that they could do to support the Panel – *“small acts of how to make Renfrewshire fairer we can all make and contribute to.”*

The majority of those who submitted feedback stated that the panel achieved their final objective which was to identify key external partners to work with. One of the 2 responses which indicated that this objective hadn't been achieved was qualified by the comment, *“it's just making sure that the panel are not overloaded and that other networks should be utilised for this type of approach.”*

No suggestions for improvement to the event were made and attendees indicated that they would like follow-up events or updates and more time to spend with the Panel.

Attendees were asked to note one key takeaway from the event and some of these comments are listed below:

“Impressed by the knowledge and enthusiasm of the Panel and how well connected they have become in a short space of time”

“That we really need to listen to what the Panel are saying, and we must do what we can to stop the culture whereby Panel members and all living with similar difficulties and issues feel they are being looked down upon. Their lives are incredibly difficult and their input invaluable.”

“The Panel is doing a lot of great work, and are well supported by STAR.”

“That it's fantastic that we have the panel in Renfrewshire.”

“That the group is doing meaningful work. I was especially impressed by all the different council services they have engaged with and influenced!”

5. Next steps from the Panel's perspective

The Panel believes consultations should not happen in silos and that coordinated work must be undertaken to analyse and address the bigger picture of the lack of fairness in Renfrewshire.

The Panel also feels that the Council's role is one of leadership of networks of external agencies and direct delivery of services for which it is responsible.

The Panel would like to contribute to the development of a draft plan to make Renfrewshire Fairer which:

- States the ambition of Renfrewshire Council for a Fairer Renfrewshire;
- Outlines the contributions (what, when, who, review date) of Renfrewshire Council's services towards making Renfrewshire Fairer;
- Outlines the major contributions (what, when, who, review date) of Renfrewshire Council's key partners;
- Outlines the contribution (what, when, who, review date) of community-led services towards Renfrewshire being fairer, and the support for the development of community-led services towards this aim; and
- Sets out the oversight and accountability arrangements for delivery of the plan.

The Panel would like to support a subsequent event which involves more Council departments, key external partners, and community-led services, to discuss the draft Fairer Renfrewshire plan, with a view to both strengthening the draft and determining the wider partnership contributions to making Renfrewshire fairer.

6. Council Next Steps

Renfrewshire Council commits to continue to work alongside the Panel to gain their insights in how to make Renfrewshire fairer. They will also look to improve cross-service working and involve services, projects and people within the Council and beyond not currently included in Fairer Renfrewshire planning and delivery.

The output of the event, including the commitments and actions identified within table discussions will be discussed and progressed by the Fairer Renfrewshire Officer Group.

Officers within the Partnerships and Inequalities team will involve the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel in planning processes supporting the development of steps to be taken by the Council and its partners towards realising the objective and of a Fairer Renfrewshire. This will include sharing the output of the event with the Community Planning Partnership, to consider the wider partnership effort required to achieve a Fairer Renfrewshire.

Fairer Renfrewshire Panel Members taking part:

Nigz Azim

Regine Bews

Tony Carr

Kate Ebouh

Sarah Findlay

Angela Gilmour

Craig Green

Linda Greig

Lisa McDonald

Tracy Navarra

George Walker

Many thanks to STAR Project for supporting the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel and this event