

To: Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee

On: 5 February 2025

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 As was reported to Sub-Committee in November 2024, 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 and supports 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.
- 4.2 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
- 4.3 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. Where there were geographical gaps, further applications were invited, and all available funding was allocated by early December.
- 4.4 The bids were scrutinised by a panel made up from Renfrewshire Council, Renfrewshire HSCP and Engage Renfrewshire and recommendations made around approval. The fund this year has attracted applications with a good geographical spread, with many of the villages and towns represented as well as most areas of Paisley including Gallowhill and Ferguslie Park. 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.

- 4.5 The funding has also supported OneRen Libraries to continue to offer hot drinks and cup a soups, which are free to all, as well as free snacks for children at some of their activities.
- 4.6 Information about all funded activities as well as activities in libraries was 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 including money advice, employability and pension credit was provided for organisations taking part.
- 4.7 Details of awards made under delegated authority are detailed at Appendix 1.

School Support and Family Advice Service

- 4.8 Between the 1st of August 2024 and the 14th of January 2025, the School Support Service assisted 82 clients. These clients made a combined 141 individual contacts. The most popular advice areas were benefits and housing. During this period, parents/carers booked 82 appointments, members of staff booked 6 appointments, Pupils (S4, S5, or S6) booked 6 times, members of staff on behalf of a family booked 5 times and parents/carers of P7 Pupils booked 2 times. There were 13 clients who booked an appointment and didn't show, and RCAB will continue to issue multiple reminders prior to appointments.
- 4.9 The School Support Service during this period recorded financial gains for clients 37 clients totalling £121,482.09. Most financial gains were achieved from benefit entitlements including Adult Disability Payment, Child Disability Payment, and Universal Credit. In 2024 in total, the School Support Service has helped clients to achieve a total of £262,386.01 in financial gains for 93 clients.
- 4.10 Many of the clients using the service are coming forward with issues that involve multiple Council and other services, including housing and council tax, as well as support around school placement requests and kinship care.
- 4.11 For quarter 3 of 24/25, Advice Works received 68 referrals for their Family Advice Service and completed 75 cases. For the year, this is a total of 251 referrals and 292 cases closed. The majority of these clients have received a benefit check, with some adult disability payments applications, Scottish Child Payment and Free School Meals and School Clothing Grant applications. The majority of these referrals came from Health Visitor teams, with a number too from Social Work, Education and through self-referral.
- 4.12 Client Financial Gain, year to date for Family Advice is £45,925.10, however even in cases where a client speaks to an adviser and there is no financial gain made, the client benefits from the reassurance of a benefit check and meeting with Advice Works opens discussion on all financial matters that may be worrying the client, such as debts and budgeting.

4.13 With regard to the Child Poverty Priority Groups, Advice Works have seen 209 families falling into those categories so far this year.

CHILD POVERTY STATS	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Lone Parent	30	24	12		66
Disabled Ad/child	15	15	9		39
3+ children	7	3	4		14
Minority ethnic	16	9	5		30
Child under 1	21	10	9		40
Parent under 25	8	9	3		20
TOTAL	97	70	42	0	209

4.14 Further promotion of the Family Advice service is being planned for early 2025, as part of a general promotion of support for families including School Support and the family Wellbeing service.

Special Needs in Pregnancy - Stronger Start

4.15 As previously reported to the Sub-Committee, Renfrewshire Council has been working with Renfrewshire HSCP, NHSGGC and Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau as well as representatives from Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire, as the service covers those areas, as part of the steering committee supporting a pilot for an advice and advocacy service within the Special Needs in Pregnancy service (SNIPs) at the Royal Alexandra Hospital. The service was set up after Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau were successful in an application to the National Lottery Improving Lives Fund, and was awarded £95,000 to run a pilot of the service for one year.

4.16 This 'Stronger Start' service, which supports pregnant women/new mothers with complex needs such as addiction, commenced in January 2024, with funding due to run out at the end December 2024. To end September 2024 the service had received 75 referrals and made financial gains for clients of £61,395, exceeding the project expectations. After a further funding bid was made to the National Lottery, the project has received 2 more years funding taking it to the end of 2026.

4.17 Most of the advice provided has been around benefits, with money and housing the next highest categories. The service is person centred, and due to the advocacy aspect, is able to support clients, for example in meetings around housing. Because the service is run by RCAB, it can provide easy access to the RCAB legal service where appropriate, supporting mothers around eviction and domestic violence.

4.18 For less complex Renfrewshire cases, the health service staff continue to refer clients to Advice Works Family Advice Service.

Lived Experience Panel

4.19 Elected Members have been given a number of updates relating to work of the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel. From the end of October, for 5 weeks, the Fairer Renfrewshire Panel worked on a piece of commissioned work for Renfrewshire HSCP, where they considered the outcomes of the NHSGGC Public Health and Wellbeing Survey and presented on their findings to a partnership

working group involving members of staff from Renfrewshire's HSCP, Renfrewshire Council, Engage Renfrewshire and local family support group the Star Project (who facilitate the Panel). The feedback clarified the collective views, concerns, and suggestions of the Panel members and this will be taken forward to inform the Community Planning Partnership Executive.

- 4.20 In December, the Panel heard from HSCP around their planned work on Cost of the Nursery day, and agreed to be involved in developing and supporting this training which will take place in Early Learning Centres in February/March. The January meeting will see representatives of EH&I attending the Panel to discuss school meals, while sessions around affordable credit and the new Digital Strategy are also being planned for 2025.

Community Needs Assessment in Gallowhill

- 4.21 As previously reported to the sub-committee, late in 2023, Renfrewshire HSCP was successful in a funding bid to NHS GGC 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 270 responses have been received to December, with 190 community members spoken to face to face and feedback captured.
- 4.22 A report will be produced detailing the findings from the Community Needs Assessment, and it is expected that this will be launched in Spring, while Active Communities will continue to work in the area and keep and expand the connections made with the Gallowhill community utilising Winter Connections funding to offer fun activities to the community along with a meal each week.
- 4.23 At Leadership Board on 4 December, £50,000 of Fairer Renfrewshire funding was allocated in grant funding to Active Communities to support the continuation of community development activity in Gallowhill following the publication of the Community Needs Assessment. This will provide capacity to support the development and implementation of actions emerging from the community needs assessment, and continue to improve and expand community led activity and infrastructure in the area. Wider work will also be undertaken to develop a place-based approach based on the learning from the CNA.

Digital - DigiKnowVember

- 4.24 The Audit Scotland report 'Tackling Digital Exclusion' released in August 2024 highlights the ongoing need for digital inclusion across Scotland highlighting that around one in six adults do not have digital skills for everyday life. According to the Scottish Households Survey of December 2023, one in ten do not have access to the internet, something considered a basic necessity for everything from bills and banking, to keeping in touch with family and friends.
- 4.25 To support digital inclusion, DigiKnowVember was a series of digital inclusion events which took place within Renfrewshire in the first week of November 2024. These were predominantly free to attend, and they were made possible through the participation of organisations involved with the DigiRenNetwork and Citizen's Voice Forum to take part in delivering sessions. These sessions

ranged from digital skills training, information discussions on specific topics, and drop ins to specific sessions such as employability.

4.26 Over the week, 29 events took place, online, in person and hybrid, with the timetable as below.

Mon 04	Tue 05	Wed 06	Thu 07	Fri 08
GetSafe/RenSafe Online Information Stall	RenSafe Online Safety Ambassador Training	Digital Health and Care Scotland - Digital Inclusion in Health and Social Care	Digital Discovery Drop-In	"What does digital inclusion mean for me?"
Digital Health and Social Care Human Rights Principles	DigiKnow themed Digital Champions Catch Up	Parental Job Club	Renfrew Outreach	Gallowhill Community Breakfast
Drop In Employability Information Session	Get Connected: Exploring ALISS & Discover Digital	Digital Discovery Drop-In	Online Safety, Current and Emerging Scams, Misinformation and Digital Literacy	Get Connected: Digital Support for All
Circuit in Renfrewshire	Glenburn Community Centre Outreach	Digital Landline Switchover Webinar	Getting started with digital inclusion	Digital Cafe
Aye Mind - Online Resource for Youth Mental Health	Digital Champion Training from Mhor Collective	Johnstone Outreach	Digital Skills Drop-In x Health and Social Care Alliance Roadshow	
Digital Lifelines	Digital Art - an introduction to free online tools to make your own digital art	Digital Champion Digital Skills Drop-in	Digiren Network	
	First Steps into VR	Digital Drop in at Station 7		
		Intergenerational Digital Session		

4.27 DigiKnowVember was evaluated, with the subsequent report published on the Engage Renfrewshire website. Feedback from the evaluation will be used to inform future similar events.

Fair Food Renfrewshire

4.28 The Fair Food Renfrewshire Steering Group, which met initially in September 2023, has continued to meet on a quarterly basis with the most recent meeting taking place in late November, where nutrition for young people was one of the areas of focus.

4.29 A six-month plan was agreed in August 2024 by the Steering Group. The focus of the plan is on communications and marketing, re-establishing a Food Support network forum to discuss emergency and community food, and investigating the possibility of increasing access by local food producers to procurement frameworks.

4.30 The first meeting of the reformed Food Support forum was held at the end of October 2024, with participating groups expressing an appetite for the forum to be held regularly every three months. The purpose of the forum was a space for a discussion on identifying and solving issues for those suffering from food insecurity and those providing emergency and community food, exploring opportunities for collaborative working, knowledge sharing and identifying key priorities. Whilst this forum will concentrate on tackling food poverty, there could also be an element of overlap with active food citizenship, building public awareness, tackling food waste and creating a local good food movement.

4.31 The Scottish Government's National Good Food Nation Plan consultation analysis results were published on 27 September 2024, but no response has yet been published. It is likely that the response will include draft revisions to the Plan before being laid before the Scottish Parliament. Officers will attend an online meeting on 30 January to get an update on the process of updating the Good Food Nation Plan and an overview of the timescales associated with publication of the final Plan from the Head of the Good Food Nation Team at the Scottish Government. It is envisaged that once the National Good Food Nation Plan has been finalised, a Council food strategy can be drafted to reflect the new statutory duties and the requirements of Renfrewshire communities.

Wider developments and next steps

4.32 Members are asked to note that work is underway to bring forward proposals for Fairer Renfrewshire programme funding to be allocated for 25/26. These relate to previously supported Tackling Poverty/Fairer Renfrewshire funded initiatives as well as new and emerging priorities. A table detailing current projects under the Fairer Renfrewshire 24/25 programme are detailed at Appendix 2 for members information, this includes funded projects and projects co-ordinated by the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme team.

4.33 Officers are currently working with Council services and partners delivering projects within the Fairer Renfrewshire programme to assess options for future delivery, considering current data and intelligence around current local challenges for household and impact of current projects. The proposed 25/26 programme will then be presented to a future Leadership Board for approval.

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

Author: Laura McIntyre, Head of Policy and Partnerships

Appendix 1 – Winter Connections Grant Funding

Applications Approved under delegated authority by Head of Policy and Partnerships				
Organisation	Area	Funding Requested	Purpose	Funding approved
Erskine Arts	Erskine	£2,000	Soup Sessions	£2,000
Rays of Hope	Elderslie	£2,000	Hope Project	£2,000
Renfrew YMCA SCIO	Renfrew	£2,000	Connect and Chat	£2,000
Twist and Hit Cheerleaders	Paisley	£2,000	Winter Youth Club	£2,000
Brick Lane Music Academy	Paisley	£2,000	Soup and a Jam	£2,000
Friends of Howwood Park	Howwood	£2,000	The Tuesday Club	£2,000
Just Dive In CIC	Paisley	£2,000	Winter Warmth and Wellbeing: Crafting, Floating, and Swimming for Older Adults	£2,000
Johnstone Castle Learning Centre	Johnstone	£2,000	Johnstone Castle Learning Centre	£2,000
Linwood Community Council	Linwood	£2,000	Winter Connections	£1,000
KLAS Care CIC	Linwood	£1,680	Family Connections	£1,680
Renfrewshire Rainbow Buddies	Shortroods	£2,000	Shortroods Youth Club	£2,000
Home-Start Renfrewshire & Inverclyde	Paisley	£2,000	The Warm Place with Home Start	£2,000
STAR Project	Paisley	£2,000	STAR Winter Connections	£2,000
ROAR Connections for Life Ltd	Johnstone	£2,000	Jam Jar Movies at Station Seven	£2,000
The Tannahill Centre	Paisley Ferguslie Park	£2,000	Breakfast at the Tanny	£2,000
Scottish Afro Caribbean Arts Association	Paisley Gallowhill	£2,000	Winter Unity	£2,000
Renfrewshire Effort to Empower Minorities (REEM)	Paisley	£2,000	The Get Together Project	£2,000
The Thursday Club	Paisley Glenburn	£2,000	Winter Warmer Project -	£2,000
Kilbarchan Improvement Project	Kilbarchan	£1,200	Winter Movies – this application was later withdrawn by the applicant	£1,200
Howwood Community Council	Howwood	£2,000	Winter Warmers	£2,000
Foxbar Elderly Forum	Foxbar	£2,000	Foxbar Elderly Forum	£2,000
Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust	Lochwinnoch	£2,000	Wellness Workshops	£2,000
Lochwinnoch Dodge Ball Club and Drop In	Lochwinnoch	£2,000	Youth Drop In Sessions	£2,000
Johnstone Dementia Friendly Group	Johnstone	£2,000	Still Here	£2,000
Kairos Women+	Paisley	£2,000	Community Soup	£2,000

Paisley North Church of Scotland	Ferguslie	£2,000	Wednesday Drop in Group	£1,000
Paisley YMCA	Paisley	£2,000	Cosy Crafts @ The Y	£2,000
Ralston Primary OSC	Paisley	£2,000	Winter Drama Club and Show	£2,000
Renfrew Trinity Church	Renfrew	£1,150	Lite Bites @ Renfrew Trinity	£1,150
CREATE Paisley	Paisley, Linwood and Johnstone	£1,870	CREATE Winter Drop In for Young People	£1,870
Shopmobility Renfrewshire	Paisley	£2,000	Mobility Crafters	£1,490
Dates-n-Mates	Paisley	£1,470	Dates-n-Mates	£1,470
Jubilee House	Paisley	£2,000	Winter Activities Group	£2,000
Loud n Proud	Paisley	£2,000	The Tuesday Club	£1,000
Houston Community Council	Houston	£1,047	Senior Citizens Film Shows	£1,047
Pachedu	Paisley	£1,950	Pachedu Young Visioners	£1,950
Preshal Trust	Paisley	£1,980	Preshal Paisley - Heat up and eat up	£1,980
School of African Cultures	Paisley	£2,000	Tosakana	£1,340
The Bungalow	Paisley	£2,000	The Bungalow Club	£1,000
Inchinnan Development Trust	Inchinnan	£878	Inchinnan Connects through Winter Craft Sessions	£878
Active Communities	Paisley Gallowhill	£1,990	Gallowhill Meet, Greet and Eat	£1,990
Langbank Swingpark Regeneration	Langbank	£2,000	Langbank Winter Socials	£2,000
OneRen Libraries	All libraries	£2,155	Refreshments and snacks across all libraries	£2,155

Appendix 2: Fairer Renfrewshire Work Programme 2024/25

Fairer Renfrewshire – Work Programme 24/25
Improving Financial Security
Additional provision of dedicated welfare rights service contracted to RCAB
Schools Support Service - Dedicated advice provided within all secondary school settings
Family Advice – Dedicated advice provided to families with children, including primary schools, early years settings, and the Healthier Wealthier Children pathway working with expectant and new parents
Energy Advocacy – Provision of one energy advocate as part of Council’s Energy Management Unit
Winter school clothing top-up – Provision of further £50 top-up payment per child in receipt of School Clothing Grant
Supporting health and wellbeing for low-income families with children
Breakfast clubs – Provision of breakfast clubs in some schools
Cost of the School Day fund – Discretionary fund distributed across all schools to mitigate the Cost of the School Day
Peer Health programme – Training young people across secondary schools to become peer educators on a range of health and wellbeing topics
Summer of Fun – A programme of activities and food for children and young people over the summer holidays
Skoobmobile – Mobile library service promoting a love of reading and reading together for children
Building community capacity and resilience
Winter Connections – A programme of activities hosted by local groups that support people to connect to others within their community over the winter period
Fair Food Renfrewshire – A partnership of organisations working together to ensure access to good food for all
Renfrewshire Affordable Credit Alliance – A partnership of organisations working together to champion fair and honest finance
Advice Partnership Renfrewshire – A partnership of organisations providing advice services across Renfrewshire
Digital Inclusion – Provision of digital champions embedded within OneRen
Advancing equality of opportunity
Development of equalities workstream within Fairer Renfrewshire programme – under development
Work to explore inequalities faced by older people in Renfrewshire and pilot preventative interventions, delivered by ROAR
Developing understanding and insight
Cost of Living Dashboard – Data and analysis to understand the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on local people and services
Data Deep Dive – Detailed analysis to understand the nature and depth of child poverty locally, particularly for priority families and at locality level
Renfrewshire Community Survey – A community survey to build understanding of impacts of the pandemic and cost of living crisis on individual households
Gallowhill – Developing partnership, place-based approaches to tackling rising child poverty at neighbourhood level
Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel - Developing models of participation for people with lived experience of poverty to inform the Council’s policy and practice