
Report To: Policy and Resources Committee **Date:** 4 June 2024
Report By: Corporate Director
Education, Communities and
Organisational Development **Report No:** PR/22/24/LL/TM
Contact Officer: Tony McEwan **Contact No:** 01475 712828
Subject: Update on Inverclyde Anti-Poverty Initiatives June 2024

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 For Decision For Information/Noting
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with progress and development on the Anti-Poverty Initiatives funded by the Inverclyde Council Anti-Poverty recurring budget to date.
- 1.3 Inverclyde Council and the HSCP allocated a total budget of £1.08 million per year for financial year 2021/22 and 2022/23 to fund a range of time-limited local initiatives to mitigate poverty and deprivation. The Council contributed £830k and HSCP £250k. This report provides progress against the initiatives relevant to the Council-funded projects.
- 1.4 The report also recommends the Committee notes the progress and development of actions to alleviate food poverty which were agreed through delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Education, Communities and Organisational Development.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee:
- notes the content and progress of the projects of this report;
 - notes the financial information in Appendix 1; and
 - notes the outcome of the food insecurity funding in Winter 2023/24.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities and Organisational Development

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 In 2021 Inverclyde Council and HSCP agreed to create a £1.08 million budget to fund a range of local initiatives to mitigate the impact of poverty and deprivation levels that were reported in the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2020.
- 3.2 These initiatives are targeted towards communities and people most likely to be affected by deprivation, poverty, and inequalities, including males affected by drug and alcohol use, early intervention for families living in poverty and encouraging new businesses to start up in areas with the greatest deprivation levels.
- 3.3 Since the initial initiatives were agreed, some changes were made to better reflect the changing needs of communities, to improve outcomes and to continue/ discontinue funding depending on impact and outcomes.
- 3.4 Progress on initiatives and against spend have been reported regularly to the Policy and Resources Committee, with a specific full evaluation report being submitted on 21 November 2023.
- 3.5 The Full Council in December 2022 agreed a £600k saving from the Council's portion of the recurring anti-poverty budget of £830k, leaving £230k. It also agreed to add in existing Education funding for various education initiatives relating to anti-poverty, totalling £259k. The total recurring anti-poverty budget available for 2023/24 being £489k. As part of the 2024/26 budget process Members agreed to allocate £35k of the unallocated recurring budget to assist with the cost of making playschemes free. The remaining £17k unallocated balance was agreed as a saving.
- 3.6 In addition to this recurring budget there is an earmarked reserve made up of the carry forward from previous year's anti-poverty funding of £1,202m together with £800k additional funding from reserves, agreed by Members as part of the 2023/24 budget process. A portion of this funding is required in 2023/24 for completion of some of the original anti-poverty projects. The provisional outturn position for 2023/24 is spend of £363k against these projects, with a projected carry forward to 2024/25 of £1.748m. In addition to this, Members agreed a further £500k allocation from reserves in February 2024. A detailed breakdown of this information is contained in Appendix 1, which also details the commitments against the overall 2024/25 funding. There is currently £774k unallocated.
- 3.7 The initiatives and interventions developed with the Anti-Poverty Funding are just one part of the Council's approach to alleviating poverty in Inverclyde and are, together with the anti-poverty fund, aligned with the actions and outcomes of the Local Child Poverty Action Report which is reported to the Alliance Board annually in line with the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

4.0 PROGRESS ON INITIATIVES

- 4.1 In November 2023, Committee approved the continuation of dedicated time of a team leader within CLD which has been funded from the anti-poverty budget to provide support to each of the project leads to ensure the outcomes achieved remained in line with the Inverclyde anti-poverty agenda. An officer group remains in place while the anti-poverty funding remains.
- 4.2 Overall, positive progress has been made in the continued review and development of the various initiatives, which are demonstrably creating new opportunities and improving the quality of life for those who have engaged in the services and who are struggling financially.

4.3 **IRISE (Inverclyde Routes in to Supported Employment) PROJECT**

Project Timescale November 2021 – Extended to December 2024

This project aimed to provide individualised support to young men aged 20-40 residing in the most deprived areas of Inverclyde, with the aim of moving them into employment. Clients have a range of complex issues such as being in recovery, offending or homelessness and receive support from an Occupational Therapist and Support Workers to improve their skills and reduce the barriers to employment, education, or training. The IRISE project had initially faced multiple challenges to become established within the Inverclyde community and focused work needed to be undertaken to improve the referral pathway from partner agencies.

The HSCP project team has developed a more sustainable model of delivery beyond December 2024. The development of this project has allowed services to share these challenges, improve learning and celebrate successes. The project is currently engaging with 9 men with a total of 38 men being engaged in the work of the project since it began. All are at different stages in their recovery journey with some actively working, some seeking work, or attending further education.

4.4 **Food Insecurity**

Project Timescale - December 2021- December 2024

This funding committed Inverclyde Council to implement and develop the first Zero Waste Food Pantry in Grieve Road in December 2021. The funding was used to commission the Inverclyde Community Development Trust (ICDT) to deliver the Pantry; to support the local community with volunteering opportunities; and engage with a wide range of service users to access the service and ensure it meets their needs. The ICDT used the allocated funding as with leverage to receive match funding opportunities and to apply to the National Lottery to establish a second pantry in Port Glasgow. Committee agreed in November to continue to fund the Pantry Service until December 2024.

The funding has enabled the Pantries to further develop of local collaborations and partnerships, including the Food Network and the Inverclyde Food Growing Network. Adaptation of the service will provide sustainability by continuing, to attract new members to both pantries, including younger households and those not in employment. The combined Pantry membership is now 2,027: 1190 members for Grieve Road and 837 for Port Glasgow. Since November 2023, 81 new members have joined the Port Glasgow Pantry and 143 new members have joined Grieve Road. 60% of members are in receipt of benefits including Universal Credit or Pensions.

The Pantries have created a Pay It Forward scheme, to support people when they do not have the £2.50 to purchase their shopping. The Pay It Forward scheme accounts for 10% of the Pantry sales and supports people are facing food insecurity, for some people this is used fortnightly or weekly depending on their household financial circumstances. The Pantry also works closely with the library which has community fridges, and any excess foodstuff is delivered to the community fridge and given to the community free of charge.

The Pantry has distributed 186 tonnes of with the support of 39 volunteers at various times, there have been 8 volunteers moved onto employment and 4 volunteers have moved onto further education. Currently there are 18 volunteers working between the 2 Pantries.

4.5 **Glasgow Fare Share Membership**

Project Timescale - December 2021 – December 2024

Inverclyde Council has continued to purchase 2 Super Memberships from Fare Share Scotland until December 2024 at a cost of £10,281 each per year. The two memberships provide weekly food to the two Community Pantries which alleviates the pressure on the pantry as the Fare Share memberships guarantees weekly stock that is subsidised with local surplus contributions.

This charity is based in Glasgow and is the 4th largest Fareshare depot in the UK with more than 100 members. From 1 November until 30 April 2024 Inverclyde's Fareshare memberships have provided 124,876 kilograms of surplus food to Inverclyde, this includes more than 18,000kg of fresh fruit and vegetables. The food mainly consists of vegetables, dairy, fruit, bread and meat, tins, and occasional ready meals.

4.6 Inverclyde Food Banks – 2023 Winter Food Insecurity Payment

The local foodbanks were invited to come together to share good practice, discuss sustainability around the provision of free food, identify who is accessing the foodbanks and identify service support which will support the community and reduce the need for foodbanks. The Salvation Army in Port Glasgow, the Port Glasgow Church Angels, the I58 Trussel Trust, and Branchton Community Centre received funding in December 2023 and attended several meetings to discuss how they can support each other to meet the needs of the community.

The peer support group recognised that apart from the food provision there was little commonality between the foodbank organisations. The two foodbanks in Port Glasgow are working together with the Port Glasgow Pantry when possible, however, there is still a reluctance to request and record the family demographics, to implement a referral system or put processes in place that may result in people not receiving food. However, there is an understanding that the processes that are currently in place and the reliance on public sector funding to purchase food is not sustainable. More than 314 individual households requested a food bag from Port Glasgow Church Angels, many of the households are returning on a weekly basis and most of the households are PA15 postcode area.

Branchton Community Centre provided a food share service and incorporated the Warm Hand of Friendship funding to offer meals, food vouchers, discounted shopping, winter clothing and blankets, hot water bottles, gloves, scarves, and Christmas toy packages to families who had been referred. The food share shop in Branchton provided support to more than 2000 people between December 2023 and March 2024.

The i58 Trussell Trust food bank continues to support vulnerable people who have been referred by local services and agencies, there were 1809 referrals between January – March 2024. The biggest referring agency is Alcohol and Drug Services, followed by Advice Services and Homelessness services. The user demographics include 95 lone parent families, and 18 families with 3 or more children, the most common reason for requesting food from the food bank is because of the rising cost of essentials.

4.7 Support for Credit Union Movement

Both Tail O' the Bank Credit Union and Port Glasgow Credit Union remain financially sound and committed to serving their local communities, however they face significant challenges including increased regulatory burden, which is resource intensive and adds to the volunteer strain to comply with the governance and compliance tasks, and both credit unions require significant investments in ICT. Both credit unions independently explored a "transfer of engagements" as the best way to ensure continued service to their communities. This has led to a merger with Rightway Credit Union, a larger and more established credit union based in Paisley. Both local branches will retain their existing locations and offer in-person services for the foreseeable future. The benefits of the local merger will enable expanded lending capacity, enhanced product range, and sustainable financial inclusion. The merger will also safeguard the continued availability of credit union services within the Inverclyde area.

This situation reflects a broader trend affecting credit unions across the UK. It is not a reflection of the performance of these specific credit unions or the dedication of their volunteers. The

volunteers will continue to play a valuable role in the deployment and delivery of financial services within their respective communities. The partnership with Rightway presents a positive outcome for the future of credit unions in Inverclyde. This merger will ensure continued access to financial services and potentially improve the overall service offerings available to the community. There are no financial implications from the Anti-Poverty Initiatives budget to support the two local credit unions currently.

4.8 **Warm Hands of Friendship 2023/24** December 2023 – March 2024

Committee approved a further £100,000 to be allocated to the Warm Hands of Friendship initiative from December 2023 until March 2024, to enable Community Learning and Development, Community Safety & Resilience and Sport, Educational and Communities to support local community organisations to deliver a range of grass root services that would meet the needs of their community. This project provides new ways to engage with local people and provided the opportunity for local organisations to understand the needs of the communities.

The Warm Hand of Friendship initiative successfully supported 58 local community organisations to deliver essential community services during the winter period. These services ranged from safe warm spaces and clothing distribution to meals provision, and community activities. Over 9,000 individuals benefitted, from the Warm Hand of Friendship initiative, there was a focus on prioritising vulnerable groups including lone parent families, families with multiple children, and older adults. Data collection revealed that the initiative helped address the difficult choice between food and heating, fostered social connections, and even led to the formation of lasting friendships and establishing support networks within the community.

4.9 **Fully funded Summer Playschemes**

As part of the Council's budget in 2024/26, it was agreed to fully fund the provision of playschemes across Inverclyde. This means that playschemes, including the playscheme provided by Play4all, can now be accessed for free. £35,000 from the recurring anti-poverty budget has been added to the £30,000 already set aside from the Council's community grants fund to ensure free access to playschemes over the summer holidays.

4.10 **Pension Credit Uptake**

The Policy and Resources committee remitted to officers to report back to a future meeting on measures taken locally to identify people who are eligible and owed Pension Credit.

Pension Credit is a reserved means-tested benefit delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for people over State Pension age with a low income. Receiving Pension Credit, even a small award, can provide access to other benefits, such as help with housing costs, council tax and heating. Welfare benefit advice and income maximisation services for older people are provided by partners represented on the Inverclyde Financial Inclusion Partnership (FIP).

The DWP runs national Pension Credit promotional campaigns and where required, help is available in Jobcentre Plus and visiting officers meet people in their homes to help with the completion of claim. Social Security Scotland provides advice and signposts those who seek their help with reserved benefits to the DWP and to local services.

HSCP Advice Services, Financial Fitness and River Clyde Homes Financial Wellbeing Team deliver a range of proactive and reactive services from their offices, by phone and at venues across the community. In addition to supporting clients through the claim process, advocacy services to challenge decisions are provided where appropriate. Services are promoted using a

variety of methods including newsletters, new tenancy packs, social media and at outreach events organised themselves, and by various groups and bodies.

The HSCP Advice Service has arrangements with other services including assisting the Centre for Independent Living where clients are offered a benefit check as part of the financial assessment for Care and Support at Home Services with the Advice Service supporting partners who remain in the family home. The Macmillan Cancer Support section of the service has a well-established pathway with the Inverclyde Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ), ensuring clients receive financial wellbeing advice and guidance and the wider ICJ support. The Advice Service also meet with groups, such as those with addictions and the homeless, albeit not specifically older people.

River Clyde Homes' Financial Wellbeing Service offers all tenants and occupants of pension age a benefit health check. The team attended each of the association's sheltered complexes and high flats in 2023 with more visits planned this year. Wardens and housing officers are trained to identify and refer those potentially eligible for Pension Age benefits to the service.

Financial Fitness' services are available to all Inverclyde residents and have a contractual arrangement to provide services to the tenants of Oak Tree, Cloch and Link Housing Associations. Joint targeted campaigns for particular social groups, including older people have been run and they provide a weekly surgery at the Carers Centre where they engage with many older people and their carers. Older people account for approximately 32% of Financial Fitness' service users.

Partners who carry out income maximisation services share the view that there is good uptake of Pension Credit in Inverclyde because benefit checks infrequently identify unclaimed entitlements. However, more in depth assessment of service users' circumstances, highlighting entitlement to Attendance Allowance, a non means tested benefit for personal support needs, can be a trigger for Pension Credit entitlement.

Pension Age Disability Payment replaces Attendance Allowance and will be delivered by Social Security Scotland, becoming available across Scotland by 22 April 2025. The new benefit will be supported by Social Security Scotland Local Delivery providing person-to-person support with applications and questions about the application process.

While there is no local Pension Credit local data available, social policy software and analytics company, Policy In Practice estimated in February 2022 that there were 122 older people in Inverclyde who claimed Housing Benefit who may have been eligible but were not receiving Pension Credit. Housing Benefit decision letters inform benefit recipients when they may be eligible for Pension Credit and to seek advice.

The Financial Inclusion Partnership has re-focused efforts and plans are being developed to raise the profile of pension age welfare benefits to increase uptake across Inverclyde.

4.11 **Scottish Welfare Fund**

Anti-Poverty Funding of £40,000 allocated on a recurring basis allows Crisis Grants to be enhanced by 20% above the government minimum level. A total of 1,696 Crisis Grants were awarded during 2023/24, totalling £193,330, compared with 2,328 grants totalling £271,475 in 2022/23. Reduced demand for Crisis Grants during 2023/24 can be explained by cost-of-living awards made by the Department for Work and Pensions in three instalments totalling £900 to people on means tested benefits. The DWP payments are not due to continue into 2024/25 so Scottish Welfare Fund applications are expected to revert to more normal levels as a result the absence of these extra funds reaching people on low incomes. The core allocation will be supported in 2024/25 by one-off Anti-Poverty Funding of £50,000 agreed by Committee in

November 2023. More detail on Scottish Welfare Fund is found in the Finance Service Update found elsewhere on the agenda.

4.12 Update on Scottish Government funding for Early Adopter and Pilot Projects

Inverclyde Council secured funding of £218k from the Scottish Government in financial year 2023/24 for the Early Adopter Childcare project in Port Glasgow. This initiative targets specific groups within the local community. The Council is currently awaiting confirmation of its share of the £16m announced by the First Minister on 22 May 2024 to continue and/or expand the project in Inverclyde. However, an interim allocation of £146k has been granted to extend the existing project until August 2024.

A successful bid was also put in for Child Poverty Accelerator Fund bid to codesign with families living with children under 5years, a service to increase their employability opportunities. This complements the early adopter community and the IRISE projects. Funding of £34,000 was secured for the 2023/24 financial year, with the potential for an additional £54,000 to be allocated in 2024/25 contingent on project success.

A recent bid was submitted for funding of £271,198 for 2023/24 and £312,508 for 2024/25 to establish an anti-poverty pathfinder hub in the Boglestone Area of Port Glasgow (upper Port Glasgow). serving as a central point for multi-agency collaboration to not only support employment and person-centred support for families experiencing or at risk of poverty. This initiative directly aligns with the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan by targeting specific family groups:

- Lone parents/carers;
- Ethnic minority families;
- Families with a disabled adult or child;
- Families with a young mother (under 25);
- Families with a child under 1;
- Larger families (3+ children); and
- Families with Kinship Care.

In addition, the Pathfinder Project will look at the wider community of Port Glasgow and offer support to individuals who are living in poverty, experiencing inequalities, and who are economically inactive.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial	X	
Legal/Risk		X
Human Resources		X
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	X	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights & Wellbeing		X
Environmental & Sustainability		X
Data Protection		X

5.2 Finance

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
Anti-Poverty EMR		2024/25-2027/28	£1.474m		Unallocated balance £774,000

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments

5.3 Legal/Risk

None.

5.4 Human Resources

None.

5.5 Strategic

Tackling the causes of poverty and deprivation to reduce inequalities in Inverclyde is a key priority for Inverclyde Council and HSCP. This report provides recommendations which are in line with this priority.

5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

N/A

(a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement.
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(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report’s recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty.

(c) Children and Young People

Has a Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children’s rights.

5.7 Environmental/Sustainability

Has a Strategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?

	YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.
X	NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.

5.8 Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 None.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

Anti Poverty Earmarked Reserve**Total EMR Budget 2023/24**

EMR C/F	£1,202,000
Additional funding from Reserves (agreed 2 March 2023)	£800,000
Underspends in FSM	£46,000
Underspend Fair Share Membership	£11,000
Core Anti Poverty budget unallocated balance 23/24	£52,000
	<u>£2,111,000</u>

Less Expenditure 2023/24	(£363,124)
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Carry Forward to 2024/25	<u>£1,747,876</u>
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Add Additional Funding from reserves (agreed 29 February 2024)	£500,000
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Available Funding 2024/25	£2,247,876
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Commitments:

Employment IRISE	£641,282
Additional Food Insecurity Funding	£36,424
Dedicated Team Leader Funding	£12,943
Scottish Welfare Fund	£125,000

3 Year Clothing Grant	£300,000
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3 Year Clothing Grant Primary	£126,000
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4 Year Free School Meals	£232,000
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Total Commitments	<u>£1,473,649</u>
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EMR Balance Unallocated	£774,227
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