



3 April 2024

NOTICE OF MEETING

A meeting of the
ARGYLL AND BUTE COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
will be held **ONLINE VIA MS TEAMS AND (TBC) IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, KILMORY** on
WEDNESDAY, 10 APRIL 2024 at 10:00 AM, which you are requested to attend.

BUSINESS

1. **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES (CHAIR)** (Pages 3 - 4)
2. **APPROVAL OF LAST MINUTES (CHAIR)** (Pages 5 - 16)
3. **REVIEW OF PREVIOUS ACTIONS (RONA GOLD)** (Pages 17 - 18)
4. **ARGYLL AND BUTE OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024-2034**
 - (a) Outcome 1 - Transport Infrastructure incl. Islands Connectivity Plan Consultation (John McLuckie)
 - (b) Outcome 2 - Housing (Matt Mulderrig) (Pages 19 - 52)
 - (c) Outcome 3 - Community Wellbeing (Rona Gold)
5. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE AREA COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUPS (SHONA BARTON)** (Pages 53 - 62)
6. **CPP GOVERNANCE (RONA GOLD)**
 - (a) Report for Discussion (Pages 63 - 68)
 - (b) Improvement Service Support for Boards
7. **PROJECTS**
 - (a) CPP Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (Andy Macpherson) (Pages 69 - 72)
 - (b) Climate Change Working Group - Terms of Reference (Rona Gold) (Pages 73 - 76)
 - (c) Community Wealth Building Short Life Steering Group (Takki Sulaiman)

- 8. DIGITAL INCLUSION (IAIN MACINNES)** (Pages 77 - 84)
- 9. NATIONAL POLICY AND COMMUNITY PLANNING** (Pages 85 - 86)
 - (a) Addressing Depopulation Action Plan (John McLuckie) (Pages 87 - 90)
- 10. PARTNERSHIPS REPORTING TO CPP**
 - (a) Shaping Places for Wellbeing (Alex Wilde)
 - (b) Child Poverty (John McLuckie) (Pages 91 - 168)
- 11. COMMUNICATION**
 - (a) CPP Bulletin (John McLuckie)
- 12. PARTNER UPDATES (CHAIR)**
- 13. AOCB**
 - (a) World Drowning Prevention Day - 25th July 2024 (CHAIR)
- 14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
- 15. CLOSE**

We are delighted to announce Alasdair Paisley, Mariska Silkowski & Sophie Bennie-Twist as the new Members of Scottish Youth Parliament elect for Argyll & Bute. They will embark on a period of training and development and will fully embrace their new positions from February 24.

Entirely youth led and diverse, the Scottish Youth Parliament provides a national platform for young people to discuss the issues that are important to them, and campaign to effect the change they wish to see; developing young people to be the leaders of tomorrow through training and international opportunities, encouraging young people in decision making, supporting youth action and developing essential life skills for leadership.

It is a true model of youth participation and a key aspect of democracy in Scotland.

Our thanks also go to the hard work of our community learning staff in facilitating the recruitment process across the authority and who will provide ongoing support to our three MSYPs over the next two years as they serve their election term.

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**Minutes of the
Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership Management Committee
held in Council Chambers, Kilmory and online via MS Teams on Thursday 12
January 2024 at 1030**

Present:	
Pippa Milne, Argyll and Bute Council (Chair)	Morag Goodfellow, Highland and Island Enterprise (HIE)
Fergus Walker, Argyll and Bute Council (ABC)	Takki Sulaiman, Argyll and Bute TSI
Cllr Robin Currie, ABC	Fiona Davies, Argyll and Bute HSCP
Stuart Green, ABC	Paul Ashworth LiveArgyll
Rona Gold, ABC	Stuart McLean, ABC
Anthony Standing, SDS	Iain MacInnes, ABC
Laura Evans, Police Scotland	John McLuckie, ABC
Samantha Campbell, NHS Highland	Amie Dow, ABC
Charlie Murphy, CLES	Neil McInroy, Democracy Collaborative
Ross Hamilton, OFCOM	Andy Macpherson, ACT
Alex Wilde, Improvement Service	Graham Bell, NHS Highland Board
Patricia O'Dowd, DWP	Nicola Reaney, ABC (Secretary)
Apologies	
Joe McKay, Scottish Fire and Rescue	Fergus Murray, ABC
Kirsty Flanagan, ABC	Cllr Alistair Redman, ABC
Shona Barton, ABC	Lucy Dunbar, ABC
David Moore, Helensburgh and Lomond AGPC	Chief Superintendent Lynn Ratcliff, Police Scotland
David Adams-McGilp, Visit Scotland	Stan Philips, NatureScot
Ranald Robertson, HiTrans	David Gibson, HSCP
Alison McGrory, NHS Highland	Charlotte Craig, ABC
Rachel McGruer, Scottish Government	Gary Mulvaney, ABC

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES (CHAIR)

Pippa welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted as above. Pippa thanked Joe for his commitment to, and excellent work, with the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and the Management Committee (CPP MC), advising that he has stepped down as Chair due to conflicting work commitments. Pippa will take on the role of Chair until new formal governance arrangements are in place.

ACTION – CPP Team to write to the outgoing Chair to express thanks for being a great advocate and leader of the Community Planning Partnership.

2. APPROVAL OF LAST MINUTES (CHAIR)

The [minutes](#) of the September meeting were accepted.

(a) Review of previous actions (Rona Gold)

Rona noted that many of the previous actions were now completed. Pippa noted that Joe had met with the Dunoon Ferry Action Group and that he will meet with both Pippa and Rachel McGruer to ensure that action is completed.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM AREA COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUPS (STUART MCLEAN)

Stuart gave an overview of [his report](#) and highlighted that there had been successful meetings across all areas in October and November 2023. Colin Buchanan was appointed as Vice Chair of the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Community Planning Group (ACPG) and both Bute and Cowal and Helensburgh and Lomond ACPGs will seek to appoint new Chairs at the meetings scheduled in February 2024. Stuart noted that the terms of reference and membership of all groups will be considered at the next round of meetings.

Following concerns around road safety within Sandbank, the Council's Roads and Infrastructure Services will submit a report to a future Bute and Cowal ACPG for consideration of the introduction of possible safety measures in that area. Luing Community Council shared a report on flooding risk on the Island at the Oban, Lorn and the Isles ACPG. They are in the process of setting up advice and assistance on this but lack the technical knowledge to navigate ownership of different parts of the island. Cllr Kain offered to facilitate contact between Roads and Infrastructure and the Community Council to discuss what support can be given to them.

Pippa thanked Stuart for his report that highlights how the updates from Partners, Community Councils, Development Trusts and Community Groups are closely linked to the Argyll and Bute Outcomes Improvement Plan (ABOIP) key priority areas of Housing, Transport Infrastructure and Community Wellbeing.

Cllr Currie was concerned that none of the ACPG Chairs or Vice Chairs were able to attend the meeting. Pippa noted that the late rearrangement of the meeting date may have contributed to that, and should not be taken as lack of commitment. Rona added that the ACPG Chairs and Vice Chairs had been heavily involved in participation over the past week in the Education Scotland Audit of Community Learning and Development, and gave a full and positive view of their contributions in those roles as a voice for their community members.

4. COUNCIL AREA PLANS (STUART GREEN)

Stuart gave [a presentation](#) on the work he is leading on the development of 8 area plans across Argyll and Bute to identify local service prioritisation and investment opportunities in our communities. The 8 geographical areas covered by the plans match the localities initially identified by the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and closely align with areas identified in the Council's Housing Needs Demand Assessment. There is also a strategic fit with a wide range of socio-economic data. In addition, the 8 areas aggregate up into the 4 key administrative Council areas and disaggregate down into Community Council areas and Wards.

To date, the limited funding opportunities that arise from the UK or Scottish Governments are usually announced with short bidding notice periods, yet the amount of work required to develop a suitable business case is high. This can be challenging for communities to respond to especially when funding needs to be spent in the same financial year. The area plans look to establish a clear record of the capital project visions and aspirations within communities, and what already exists or is in the pipeline. By getting ahead of the curve in this, the hope is to be

able to take greater advantage of, and capitalise on, future available funding and investment opportunities. The plans seek to promote projects that align with the Council's strategic plans, however the inclusion of a project within a plan is not a guarantee of funding. The plans will also align with existing work in the area in relation to Community Wealth Building opportunities.

Stuart advised that there will be direct community engagement and consultation moving forward with Community Councils and Development Trusts, but mindful of consultation fatigue, will also look to take advantage of existing data from previous consultations and community plans and complete a gap analysis first. £200,000 has been allocated from the Council's Priorities Investment Fund for this work and recruitment for project team members will commence in January 2024. The projected timeline of approval of all 8 area plans is January to September 2025.

Pippa thanked Stuart for his presentation and welcomed the intention to gather information from various plans into one place to ensure a cohesive approach and prevent conflicts of effort when funding becomes available. Takki noted from recent attendance at Community Council meetings where there had been a presentation on significant community benefits from an energy provider, that communities had expressed concern at a lack of "shovel ready" projects to spend upcoming funding on. He agreed that it would be really beneficial to bring together information held in various stakeholder and Council plans. Takki also noted that community members hold the information on local need, but do not necessarily have access to the information to back up their plans / aspirations. Takki was happy to support the work on the plans and commit TSI resources towards this work. Andy noted the significant parallels with Climate Change work that he is doing and he is really keen to support the project wherever possible e.g. mapping tools and benefit from the intelligence gathering.

ACTION – Stuart Green to follow up with Andy MacPherson on local plans and project co-operation.

Pippa reiterated that the intention of this work is not to take over projects from the community, but to support them by holding relevant information in one place and support feasibility of projects. Cllr Currie was keen to see the work on this progress at pace, and Stuart advised that he would be taking every available opportunity to accelerate the project, where possible.

Morag added that it is vital to ensure community expectations are managed in this process saying that realistically £20 million in funding may only equate to expenditure on 3 capital projects, and asked how engagement with business partners will take place. Stuart responded that Ishabel Bremner, Economic Development Manager, will be managing engagement with businesses.

ACTION – Stuart Green to report on progress on local plans to future CPP Management Committee meetings.

5. CROSS CUTTING THEMES

(a) Climate Change (Andy MacPherson)

Pippa opened by paying tribute to the work that Stan has done on the Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) and his tenacity on moving this work forward, noting that Rona has taken over as interim Chair of the CCWG.

ACTION - CPP Team to write to Stan to formally thank him for his work on Climate Change.

ACTION – Partners to register interest to cppadmin@argyll-bute.gov.uk in taking on the role of CCWG Chair.

Andy started in post as the Climate Change Project Manager on 30 October 2023, employed by ACT on behalf of the CPP. He thanked CPP partners for their funding contributions towards the climate change work and advised that the project was in good financial health currently, however there was a remaining funding gap at the end of project year 2 (from August 2025) of approximately £13,500. Andy has been meeting with key contacts within the CPP and the wider climate change community and has looked at the climate strategies of similar localities such as Highland and Aberdeenshire, and other public body reports, to identify parallels in that work with the specific geographical challenges in Argyll and Bute. He has also been working with the Sustainable Scotland Network and believes there is an opportunity to collaborate with them. Feedback to Andy from communities is that they want to focus on climate change action with short, snappy plans to support that. He is also keen to capture climate change plans in alignment with the ABOIP priorities of housing, transport infrastructure and community wellbeing and advised those themes emerged in stakeholder meetings.

Pippa is keen for Andy to engage with the Council Roads teams, that responded to the recent issues relating to bad weather in the area, so that they can work together to look at the effects of climate change, understand existing issues and identify any adaptations that are needed to mitigate the issues caused by severe weather. Andy said he would be delighted to do that and has already been working with the Council's Climate Change Officer.

Morag asked Andy about the Climate Change Officer vacancies that are on ACT's website, and how they interact with his role. Andy advised the recruitment of the 4 Climate Change Officers are specifically for grass roots engagement, activity, mitigation and campaigning, not at a strategic level, and he will be working closely with them to ensure there is no duplication of outcomes. Three officers have already been recruited. Takki noted there is a micro grant fund open currently to stimulate local climate activity, however, he also noted a slight decrease to the government funding being provided for Climate Action Hubs.

ACTION – Takki to circulate the up to date briefing on what Climate Change Networks do and how that ties to Andy's work.

ACTION – Takki to circulate information on the climate micro grant funding for partners to share widely.

Rona thought this work was great and asked if there was still a need for a Climate Change Working Group within the CPP, how that would look in terms of providing support to climate work, preventing duplication of efforts, and ensuring the group is fit for purpose. Takki felt the work of the ACT Climate Officers and the CCWG were quite separate, but agreed that should be kept under review.

(b) Financial Inclusion (Fergus Walker)

Fergus Walker provided a verbal update to his [paper](#) at the meeting. This included:

- Scottish Welfare Fund. From 1 April to 30 November 2023, £428,416 has been spent against the 2023/24 funding allocation of £458,284 and there is projected overspend of £200,000 for the year.
- Discretionary Housing Payment. Up to 30 November 2023, £803,862 has been spent from the initial tranche 1 funding of £869k. Fergus is responding to a Scottish Government consultation on potential changes to this fund.
- Flexible Food Fund. Up to 31 October, 2279 households facing food and fuel insecurity in Argyll and Bute had benefitted from this fund with an average client gain of £1416 per household. £204k has been granted from Shared Prosperity Funding that will allow the project to continue to 2025.
- School Clothing Project. Work continues to introduce this to Mid-Argyll and the Isles. There is now a [live website](#) for this project and Fergus is looking to work with Community Development to help identify and fill gaps in project coverage. The reuse of clothing also ties into climate goals.
- Scotland Loves Local cards / Support for Islands. From £141,000 funding provided by the Scottish Government, 1300 cards have been issued to islanders, each with a value of £85. Grant payments of £4000 have been paid to island based foodbanks. Cllr Currie noted there is a large amount of funding that remain unspent on these cards. Fergus advised that the funds on un-activated cards have been returned to the Council and have been used to supplement the second round of island funding for these cards.

Fergus advised the project working in partnership with Poverty Alliance will start this year. A project outline will be shared in due course, but in summary, they are looking to setup a Citizens Panel of people living in Argyll and Bute, on our mainland and islands, that have lived experience of poverty. The project will seek to learn from them what it is like, where the pressures are and what could be developed to help alleviate rural poverty. There is also a project in place that is working with Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau on Council Tax collection which aims to protect vulnerable people from the Debt Recovery process, recovering Council Tax in a way that is affordable for the individual and without the threat of additional legal costs and involvement of debt collection agencies.

Pippa thanked Fergus for the ongoing good work bringing additional money to people in need. Rona advised Fergus that in 2020 the CPP ran consultations with those who experienced severe financial difficulties from the impacts of the pandemic. The information shared in the consultation was harrowing and included input from Men's groups, Youth groups and those supporting someone with a disability. Rona thought it would be important for Fergus to engage with those groups as part of the Poverty Alliance project as there would be shared experience from that which is still relevant now and this was agreed by Fergus.

ACTION – Rona to share contact information for groups involved in post-pandemic financial hardship groups to Fergus Walker.

(c) Digital Communities (Ross Hamilton and Paul Ashworth)

Ross is the Regulatory Affairs Manager, Telecoms, Consumer and Post Policy at OFCOM Scotland. He gave a presentation on the work of the OFCOM Digital Inclusion team. In December, OFCOM published their annual report "[Connected Nations](#)" and there is an [interactive dashboard](#) on their website with information on fixed and mobile connectivity at a Local Authority level. Full fibre broadband is now available to 50% of properties in Scotland (1.4M households) with an annual 8%

increase of gigabit capable connectivity and an increase in 5G mobile connectivity. 84% of households in Scotland are covered by at least one of the four main network providers for 4G mobile connectivity. In Argyll and Bute, superfast broadband has seen a 4% increase, meaning over 1400 more properties can now access superfast broadband compared to 2022. Harder to reach areas in Scotland are seeing an increase in the uptake of satellite technology to deliver connectivity and the affordability of those services is beginning to improve. There has also been a good increase of 2% to the level of 4G geographic coverage in the area.

Ross is aware of concerns around the resilience of the technology network in more rural parts of Scotland and OFCOM are [consulting](#) with providers to provide greater clarity on their need to comply with security duties, such as battery power back ups, and the infrastructure that is required to ensure connectivity remains in the event of power cuts. OFCOM have no control over the switch off of PSTN, but OFCOM can work with providers to ensure that support is provided to support that transition for vulnerable people. OFCOM are looking at what more can be done at network infrastructure level and are looking to start a dialogue and discussion about what sort of aspects should be considered as part of this (e.g. how long is back up needed for?, what are the critical services that locals need to access to in a power cut?, etc), and Ross welcomed input from the CPP on this. The feedback will be included in future OFCOM guidance to providers.

ACTION – CPP members to feed back to Ross on what power backup Mobile Network Operators can and should provide.

Ross advised there has been a significant increase in the number of social tariff take-ups, however he felt there was still a lack of awareness that these tariffs existed. It was highlighted that TalkTalk are the only major operator not providing social tariffs. OFCOM are also taking action on mobile and broadband in-contract price rises and any increase must be noted clearly on sign up in a pounds and pence amount. Consultation on this ends in February 2024 with the hope it will be in place for any potential contract rises in 2025.

Pippa thanked Ross for his presentation and noted that connectivity issues also affect the availability of cheaper smart meter utilities tariffs for Argyll and Bute residents, as smart meters are not able to connect to suppliers. She was glad to see improvements in coverage across the area but felt the progress was still very slow due to the cost and complexity of installing infrastructure to cover existing gaps.

ACTION – Partners are encouraged to [share information from OFCOM of social tariff providers](#) across their networks.

Pippa asked how the CPP can highlight these issues more strongly to OFCOM and anyone else who can exert influence on this. Ross responded that service providers had met with the UK Government prior to Christmas and agreed further voluntary commitments to support the transition to VOIP for telecoms, agreeing that there are challenges in the roll-out of technologies to support that and also in providing adequate broadband coverage. He hoped that the Scottish Government would continue to find innovative solutions to those problems for fixed and mobile connectivity. He added that OFCOM are engaging as much as they can to support and advise on the development of delivery programs. He recognised the increased cost of living for those living in rural areas but the market is generally functioning well in terms of competition and affordable options for customers. Ross noted that

OFCOM leadership are very attuned to these issues too and that climate change was included for the first time in the December Connected Nations report.

ACTION – CPP to write to OFCOM and OFGEM highlighting concerns around connectivity and cost of living pressures in Argyll and Bute for telecoms, broadband and smart metered utilities provision.

Takki reiterated concerns around network resilience and the link between broadband access, telephone lines and power. A recent 16 hour power cut in his home area led to over 800 households all trying to utilise the existing poor 4G framework at the same time which highlighted the lack of resilience in the system. He added that providers really need to be planning for the rise in extreme adverse weather conditions and associated impacts on networks. Takki also expressed concern that the criteria for social tariffs may not include those who are working but still in poverty and in the reduction of postal services across Argyll and Bute. Ross advised that OFCOM regulate Royal Mail, who have had significant challenges, and they have levied a £5.5 million fine on them for failing to meet delivery targets.

Andy was keen to continue discussions with Ross off table as Argyll and Bute has a lot of isolated communities who will be heavily dependent on resilience but are likely to have the least resilient infrastructure.

ACTION – Andy and Ross to meet offline to discuss how telecoms providers assess risk for vulnerability versus likelihood of outages.

Paul then provided an update on the HMIE Community Learning and Development (CLD) Inspection which took place on 8th and 9th January. The auditors provided a positive response to the inspection and found that the self evaluation was accurate and well structured and advised they would not be returning. Inspectors noted that the team is looking at developing the reporting structure of the CLD Plan and that the new strategic plan for CLD should be available in September 2024. The final HMIE report will be published in 6 – 8 weeks.

Rona reiterated the involvement of the ACPG Chairs and Vice Chairs in the audit in a focus group on Community Voice, which is part of the Community Empowerment priority within CLD. She also noted that the CLD has been promoting social tariffs as part of its links to digital skills, and it has been included in both CPP and Community Development bulletins. In community planning, and particularly at ACPGs, the discussions that happen are very much a part of community learning and development and in raising digital awareness in communities.

Pippa gave thanks to everyone involved in the audit.

ACTION – Paul to circulate HMIE Inspection report when available.

6. ABOIP (RONA GOLD / JOHN MCLUCKIE)

Rona gave a presentation on the Argyll and Bute Outcomes Improvement Plan (ABOIP) for 2024 – 2034. The ABOIP is being created as a short vision document highlighting the 3 outcomes (transport infrastructure, housing and community wellbeing) with a longer document providing more detail, and an FAQ document covering points such as ‘what is community planning?’ and ‘what is an Outcomes Improvement Plan?’. These will be published on the [CPP website](#) at the end of

January 2024. The presentation contained high level statements of intent, in order of priority, under each of the outcomes. Rona reminded the meeting that seven areas were identified and included as part of the extensive consultation (the additional priorities were financial inclusion, climate change, digital inclusion and diverse economy / skilled workforce) but the three in focus here came out as the priorities. This does not mean the other areas are not important to the CPP, however it is important to be clear that the CPP can't do everything and there is evidence to back the focus on the main three priority outcome areas.

Rona advised that the CPP need to communicate the outcomes, agree the actions, milestones and performance measures for each of the three outcomes, and agree a governance structure to monitor the delivery of the ABOIP, and that will be addressed over the coming months, prior to agreement of the final ABOIP at the June CPP MC, although she did note that competing pressures may delay this. Rona said that more detail on the work already underway will be provided at a future CPP MC meeting. Rona was happy to speak with any partners further on the plans if needed.

Pippa thanked Rona and John for the work already undertaken on this.

ACTION – Partners are asked to provide comments on the ABOIP Outcomes Improvement Plan documents by 29 January 2024.

7. COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING (CWB) (TAKKI SULAIMAN AND CHARLIE MURPHY)

CLES were commissioned by the CPP MC to take forward work on a strategy and action plan for Community Wealth Building (CWB) and the initial report and recommendations were circulated as part of the agenda pack. Takki said the work set out to identify best practice, some useful case studies of how CWB may be taken forward in Argyll and Bute, a strategy with recommendations, an action plan and two business cases. Takki asked for the CPP MC to agree, in principle, the recommendations that have been made in the initial report before the final version is agreed by the Steering Group and returns to the next CPP MC for approval. Takki suggested that consideration is also given to the Steering Group undertaking more preparatory work for the next CPP MC including whether the Steering Group has a wider remit, to discuss how can some of the recommendations be taken forward and how CWB should be structured.

Charlie and Neil then gave a presentation on CWB in Argyll and Bute. Neil introduced himself and emphasised that CWB is a practical economic development approach to delivery on community economic aspirations and community ownership, not community development. He noted the CWB qualities that are already in place in Argyll and Bute including anchor institutions, strong procurement and existing community ownership and that these are important in terms of the report recommendations and how to scale up on the good things already happening. The draft recommendations have been driven by what they have found as a result of interviews, workshops, scoping and experience of what has worked well in other areas and he is keen to hear the feedback from the CPP MC on these.

Charlie noted that they have had discussions with CPP partners and area groups to identify what CWB meant to them and how they see it being scaled up and developed. He noted that the recommendations may take time to implement and

some may need legislative support from the Scottish Government. He then provided a reminder on the 5 main pillars of CWB (Spending, Workforce, Inclusive Ownership, Finance and Land and Property).

Recommendations include :

SPENDING PILLAR

- Establishing a CPP Procurement Working Group, bring together lead procurement officers and the VCSE sector to update on challenge and opportunities,
- Building collective market intelligence, working with SMEs and focussed towards the social economy,
- Publishing a procurement pipeline so CPP partners can make procurement more accessible and clarify bid requirements,
- CPP Meet the Buyer events, creating an opportunity where local suppliers can engage and get feedback and navigate the challenges of public sector procurement,
- Develop a procurement framework, for business support organisations to pull resources and explore good practice.

Pippa noted that all partners need to commit to working on this, although she understands that there are some limitations regarding tie-ins to national procurement frameworks and was keen to understand from CLES how that has been overcome in other areas. Takki advised there is a current review of the Procurement Reform Act 2014 and partners may want to take the opportunity to make submissions to the Economic Committee before it looks at this on the 28 February 2024, although he also thought it was worth exploring what can be done within existing legislative and regulatory frameworks. Neil thought that the Scottish Government would be interested to hear how existing policy and legislation is hampering progress on CWB.

Andy noted that in terms of developing a Climate Change Strategy in the area, procurement managers are typically under pressure to deliver value in the short term and the organisational procurement footprint is often much larger than local operations. He felt setting up a procurement working group would provide a joint approach and prevent the need to discuss this with individual partners.

Samantha felt there was so much potential for CWB to provide a transformational shift in the power dynamic and support to communities. She also thought the 5 pillars of CWB should underpin the plans and strategies of CPP partners to ensure systemic change and has potential to improve social determinants of health.

WORKFORCE PILLAR

- Developing pathways into work programs, how can partners come together to create good employment opportunities,
- Explore adaptations to a value based recruitment approach, organisations that can support local people, and young people, into employment,
- Partners mapping job families, compare and simplify the approach to recruitment and creation of applicant pools,
- Argyll and Bute Employment Charters, partnering with local business representative and organisations, acknowledging that many may want to improve their recruitment practices.

INCLUSIVE OWNERSHIP PILLAR

- Identifying ownership opportunities in growth sectors, having the social economy, social enterprises, community interest companies at the heart of sector growth,

- Employee ownership, connections between in-place experts and ecosystem support for new start social economy enterprises and the support of institutional partners,
- Opportunity to create links between procurement and social and inclusive ownership within the economy.

Andy highlighted the housing priority in the ABOIP as a great example of connected activity as it links to climate change (mitigation and adaptation), skills shortages in the region and potential pathways for business development and career prospects. Pippa agreed that business opportunities was a key part of the CWB context.

FINANCIAL PILLAR

- Mapping alternative financial infrastructure, bring together and understand the range of alternative financial mechanisms that already exist and can be accessed,
- Mapping community benefits, how to pull community benefits together for greater impact,
- Develop a local finance initiative proposal, developing an outline business case for a local community owned finance institution to connect with government funding streams to fund CWB.

LAND AND PROPERTY PILLAR

- Affordable workplace strategy, grow local community ownership in sectors and identify available business premises and future demand,
- Vacant and derelict land, not limited to typical workspaces but also social community sites, ensure communities have access to properties and land without overburdening them,
- Realisation of the public estate, partners understanding were co-location opportunities exist to free up the public estate for use by social enterprises,
- Convening a Local Landowners' Forum, with support from Scottish Government policies on land reform to engage with landowners on future land use.

Charlie recognised there are a number of challenges in Argyll and Bute, but CWB can be intrinsic to the area's economic strategy and can be driven by the CPP to address issues like the housing emergency and depopulation. He said that responsibility for CWB delivery should not fall solely on the CPP, however partners do have an important role to play and work with other groups to promote CWB. To drive CWB forward, Charlie proposed setting up two-time limited groups to take forward action-focussed work to build on the report. He also highlighted two case studies on building employee ownership and building community shared ownership of the energy transition.

Pippa thanked Charlie and Neil for their presentation. Partners were asked to submit any comments on the report and recommendations, with the intention to finalise that at the April CPP MC. The recommendations were accepted by the CPP MC in principle. Rona thanked Takki and CLES for the work that has been done on this.

ACTION – Partners to submit comments on the CLES report and recommendations on CWB to cppadmin@argyll-bute.gov.uk.

8. PARTNER WINTER UPDATES (CHAIR)

Pippa advised this item may have been more relevant had the meeting gone ahead as planned in December, however, partners can send any updates they want to share to the CPP team.

ACTION – Partners can send any winter updates to cppadmin@argyll-bute.gov.uk by 31st January.

9. AOCB (CHAIR)

(a) Update on Argyll and Bute Climate Action Network (Takki Sulaiman)

Pippa noted that Takki had covered this as part of an earlier item.

(b) National Community Planning Review and next steps (Rona Gold)

Pippa said the CPP MC will be keeping an eye on this work and contributing to that where relevant.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 10 April 2024. The remaining dates for the rest of 2024 are being finalised.

11. CLOSE

Pippa thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions at the meeting today.

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CPP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ACTION GRID – from 12 January 2024

Complete	In Progress	Outstanding	<i>Please highlight actions as per traffic light system to show progress</i>
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Date Set	Action	Who	Required by Date
23/3/23	Rona and Iain to meet to discuss the wider communication of the link for residents to explore if / when full fibre is available and information on the voucher scheme .	Rona / Iain	May 2023
22/6/23	Stan, Cllr Currie and Ross McLaughlin to meet to discuss climate change support that can be provided by the Council.	Stan, Cllr Currie and Ross M	End August 2023
22/6/23	Fergus Walker to share the details of the project with the Poverty Alliance once available, via the Community Planning team.	Fergus Walker	August 2023
22/6/23	CPP team to include a representative from the Scottish Community Planning Network to a future CPP MC at end 2023 / early 2024.	CP Team	March 2024
7/9/23	Additional development session to be arranged for new ACPG Chairs and Vice-Chairs.	CP Team	March 2024
7/9/23	Rona to link Melissa and Iain with CLD Partnership (Rhona Grant is Chair).	Rona Gold	December 2023
7/9/23	Melissa to speak to Iain MacInnes regarding the following points raised by the CPP MC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The impact of the switch-off of copper infrastructure on Argyll and Bute communities. - The messaging and communication with communities on Jura in terms of the lack of take-up of the digital infrastructure project on the island. 	Melissa Dundas / Iain MacInnes	December 2023
12/1/24	Stuart Green to follow up with Andy MacPherson on local plans and project co-operation.	Stuart Green	10 April 2024
12/1/24	Stuart Green to report on progress on local plans to future CPP Management Committee meetings.	Stuart Green	2024
12/1/24	Partners to register interest to cppadmin@argyll-bute.gov.uk in taking on the role of CCWG Chair.	All	10 April 2024
12/1/24	Takki to circulate the up to date briefing on what Climate Change Networks do and how that ties to Andy's work.	Takki	10 April 2024
12/1/24	Takki to circulate information on the climate micro grant funding for partners to share widely.	Takki	10 April 2024

Date Set	Action	Who	Required by Date
12/1/24	Rona to share contact information for groups involved in post-pandemic financial hardship groups to Fergus Walker.	Rona	10 April 2024
12/1/24	CPP members to feed back to Ross on what power backup Mobile Network Operators can and should provide.	All	10 April 2024
12/1/24	Partners are encouraged to share information from OFCOM of social tariff providers widely in their networks.	All	10 April 2024
12/1/24	CPP to write to OFCOM and OFGEM highlighting concerns around connectivity and cost of living pressures in Argyll and Bute for telecoms, broadband and smart metered utilities provision.	CPP Team	10 April 2024
12/1/24	Andy and Ross to meet offline to discuss how telecoms providers assess risk for vulnerability versus likelihood of outages.	Andy	10 April 2024
12/1/24	Paul to circulate HMIE Inspection report when available. Needs to go to CPP.	Paul	10 April 2024
12/1/24	Partners are asked to provide comments on the ABOIP Outcomes Improvement Plan documents by 29 January 2024.	All	29 January 2024
12/1/24	Partners to submit comments on the CLES report and recommendations on CWB to cppadmin@argyll-bute.gov.uk .	All	2 February 2024
12/1/24	Partners can send any winter updates to cppadmin@argyll-bute.gov.uk by 31 st January.	All	31 January 2024

Argyll & Bute Council

Housing Emergency Summit Report

February 2024



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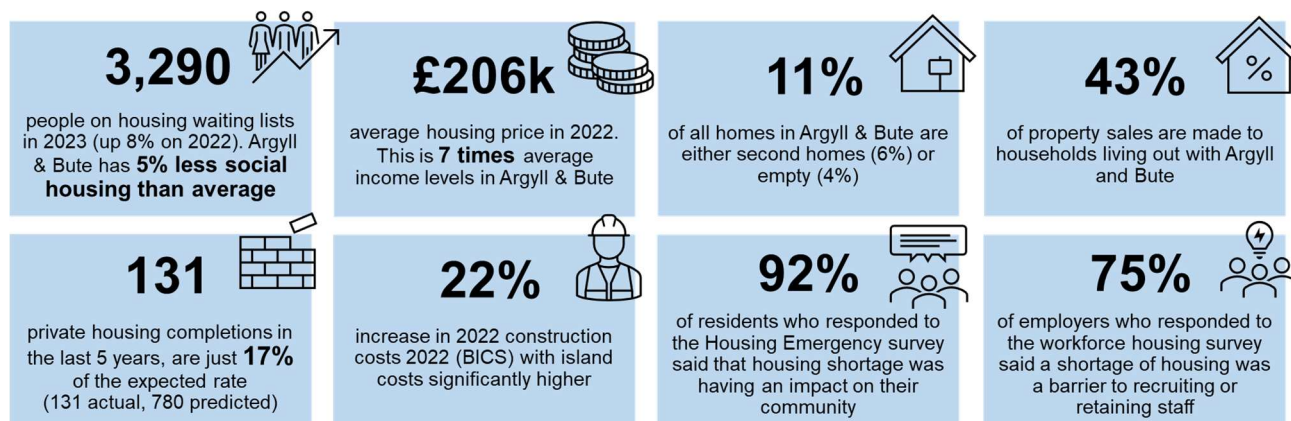
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1 Introduction

In June 2023, Argyll and Bute Council declared a Housing Emergency due to the acute shortage of housing in the area. This emergency is driven by a complex range of issues including rising house prices and rents, reducing household incomes, growing construction costs, a drop in the number of new homes being built, a shrinking private rented sector and a local population which is both ageing and declining. The scale of housing shortage and housing system pressure evident in Argyll & Bute is illustrated by the following statistics:



Declaring a housing emergency in Argyll & Bute is a call to action for government, public bodies and partners. It is intended as the catalyst to bring partners, stakeholders, investors and communities together to prioritise and commit to the collective action needed to tackle housing shortage. The Council are fully committed to working with partners to programme a broad range of activities, both in the short term and long term, to target this collective action where it is needed most.

To build and harness this collective action, a Housing Emergency Summit was held on Monday 27th November 2023 at the SAMS Campus, Oban. The purpose of the Summit was to bring partners together to forge commitments aimed at tackling housing shortage by maximising resources, pursuing innovation, coordinating planning and targeting delivery capacity. Delegates attending the Emergency Housing Summit included:

- Senior decision makers in local and national public sector bodies including the NHS, Scottish Futures Trust and Highland & Islands Enterprise
- Senior decision makers in Argyll & Bute Council
- Housing developers both commercial builders and Housing Associations
- Representatives from the Community Housing Network
- Local business leaders and funding bodies
- Third sector organisations and support agencies.

The Housing Emergency Summit was designed to focus partnership activity on prioritising and programming emergency responses across the following four themes:



Summit delegates were presented with background information on the extent and nature of housing shortage, as well as potential solutions and interventions. Appendix A provides full details of the stakeholders who attended and participated in the Summit programme. In total, 92 delegates attended and participated in the Argyll & Bute Housing Emergency Summit.

This report details the outcomes of Summit activity including the shortlisting and appraisal of housing emergency responses and the collective partnership pledge to act on each response.

2 Background to Housing Emergency Summit

In advance of the Housing Emergency Summit, extensive analysis was prepared to evidence the extent and nature of the housing emergency in Argyll & Bute and to detail current planning and activity underway to tackle housing shortage. Partners were invited to explore this evidence and consider the extent of action and innovation needed to develop an appropriate emergency response, by engaging with the following interactive briefings:

<https://youtu.be/YHGcGm92ZDs?si=CSm6Pof609hwd02W>

https://youtu.be/0f0uNOFmsIs?si=o3DSX8SOIF_-vI2P

https://youtu.be/pl9-GMWbqel?si=o01q2eask_uOdF3Z

<https://youtu.be/1Q37pQq62JQ?si=g4z6ROZfxKjwPO9e>

Briefings detailed the scale and complexity of housing emergency across each of the four Summit themes, stressing the need for brave and bold emergency responses to the following key issues:

Market Homes: Key Issues

- In 2022/23, the average house price in Argyll & Bute (£219k) exceeded the Scottish average (£216k).
- House prices have increased by 26% in the last 4 years
- Just 1 in 4 households in Argyll & Bute can afford the average house price
- Rural house prices are 24% higher than urban areas with just 1% sales in rural areas
- In 2021/22, Argyll & Bute recorded the second lowest level of new housing completions of any local authority in Scotland at 31 completions per 10,000 households
- Argyll & Bute is the most expensive place to build in mainland Scotland (AHIP grant rate adjustment)
- Skills shortages and building site constraints are barriers to market housing development

Affordable Homes: Key Issues

- There are c. 8,800 units of social housing, 18% of all stock which is 5% lower than Scotland
- Social rented stock has increased by just 3% (262 units) over the last 5 years
- Total vacancies in social housing have reduced by 20% since before the pandemic
- There are 6 applicants for every available social let in Argyll & Bute (10:1 in Coll & Tiree)
- In 2022/23, homeless applications were up by 28% on 2021/22, at 511 applications
- Whilst the SHIP programmes the delivery of 1,000 affordable housing units between 2023-28, there has been 3 consecutive years of underspend in the programme
- Home Argyll identifies significant demand for intermediate housing with limited delivery in the SHIP

Workforce Homes: Key Issues

- The working age population in Argyll & Bute is projected to decrease by almost 30% by 2028
- 2/3 households believe young people are leaving their communities due to a lack of housing
- 77% of employers report that a shortage of housing is a contributing factor in recruitment and retention issues, with over 400 posts affected across 67 employers (6 posts per business)
- 90% of employers expect there to be a problem recruiting or retaining staff in the future
- 52% of employers have considered providing housing but discounted this because of financial constraints, a lack of homes to purchase and too much competition in the housing market
- Public sector employers report recruitment pressures impacting on the delivery of essential services

Existing Homes: Key Issues

- Over 15% of Argyll & Bute's existing stock is not being utilised as a main residence including empty homes (4.4%), second homes (5.9%) and Short Term Lets (4.9%)
- Argyll & Bute records the highest level of second home ownership in Scotland
- 50% of households in Argyll & Bute cannot afford to access the housing market, with 43% of sales to households from out with the area
- For the first time in two decades, the private rented sector in Argyll & Bute is shrinking
- There is a mismatch between households and homes in the social housing sector with 56% requiring a 1-bedroom property (2,284) and just 268 1-bedroom homes available per annum

Furthermore, to identify and evidence the action that local communities and residents would prioritise to tackle housing shortage, an extensive online household survey was launched in October 2023, promoted across the Council's social media channels. To inform how the housing emergency should be tackled, the survey was intended to gather the views of local households enabling better understanding of how housing shortage affects their lives, livelihoods and communities. In total, 688 responses were provided by residents and community groups, providing essential evidence to be considered by delegates at the Housing Emergency Summit. Key headlines of this survey can be summarised as follows:

Is housing shortage having an impact on your community?

92% of respondents suggested that housing shortage was having an impact on their community

This ranged from 65% of respondents in Helensburgh & Lomond to 98% in Mull & Iona

The key impacts of housing shortage include...



Local businesses cannot recruit employees as they have nowhere to stay (73%)



People moving into my community are pricing local people out of the market (70%)



Local services (e.g. health services, schools, shops) have a shortage of people to do essential jobs due to a lack of housing (68%)



Young people are leaving my community due to a lack of housing options (68%)

Top 3 reasons that housing shortage is having a community impact include...

1. Not enough affordable/social homes to rent (80%)
2. Too many holiday homes/short term lets (70%)
3. House prices rising more than local incomes (62%)

Other reasons include...



Limited housing options for families or working aged people (59%)



Local incomes are too low to afford rent or mortgage costs (55%)



Not enough new homes being built (46%)



Not enough quality private rented sector homes (43%)



Not enough homes to buy in the housing market (39%)

92% of respondents thought there was a need for more housing to be developed in their community including...

1. Social housing/Housing Association homes (75%)
2. Housing for sale at low cost (65%)
3. Housing for young people/families (61%)
4. New homes for sale (39%)
5. Quality private rented housing (38%)



The actions local households would like to see to tackle the housing emergency include:

- **Building more homes for social rent (66%)**
- **Reducing the number of second homes and short term lets (64%)**
- **Providing more low-cost homes for rent or sale e.g. mid-market rent (62%)**
- **Develop more housing options for essential workers moving into Argyll & Bute (56%)**
- **Ensuring local people have priority for homes on the market not people moving into the area (55%)**

2.1 Call to Action: Building a Bold and Progressive Emergency Response

The housing emergency response arising from the Summit should build on the ambitious action plan currently under delivery within the Argyll & Bute Local Housing Strategy, as well as the work underway nationally to tackle housing shortage in rural areas.

National activity includes the recently published Scottish Government Rural and Islands Action Plan. The Plan sets out a range of actions to improve access to high quality affordable and market housing, enabling rural communities to live, work and thrive. The action plan includes:

- the delivery of 11,000 affordable homes in rural communities

- a £30M Rural and Island Housing Fund for community led housing, and £25M rural affordable homes funding for workforce housing
- new local authority powers to apply higher Council Tax rates for second homes, plus the extended use of rural housing burdens and reform to compulsory purchase legislation.

At a local level, the Argyll and Bute Local Housing Strategy outlines the vision and investment priorities for tackling housing need between 2022 and 2027, including:

- the delivery of 1,000 affordable homes over the next 5 years
- workforce housing projects in Tobermory and Bowmore,
- community-led housing models in Colonsay, Ulva, Ulva Ferry and Gigha
- the creation of a Rural Housing Body to enable the use of rural housing burdens
- plans for short term let control zones
- doubling the Council Tax on second homes.

Despite the opportunity and proactive local response, the call for action inspired by the Housing Emergency declaration acknowledges that the Council and partners need to go further to tackle the scale of housing shortage faced by local communities. As a result, the Summit called for partners to take bold and progressive action, inspiring extraordinary responses to an extraordinary challenge.



This means housing emergency responses must be innovative, bold, impactful and capable of achieving partner commitment to delivery

2.2 Pre-Summit Housing Emergency Workshops

To ensure that the Summit focused on the collective action partners must take to tackle housing shortage, delegates were invited to attend a programme of pre-Summit workshops focusing on each Housing Emergency theme. The focus of each workshop was to assess the barriers to tackling housing shortage and to generate ideas on potential solutions and interventions to increase supply.






Partners worked together to identify and assess housing emergency responses and interventions, defining a long-list of ideas and options. This options list formed the basis of scrutiny and option appraisal at the Emergency Housing Summit.

This approach ensured that the Housing Emergency Summit was firmly focused on building a collective response to the housing emergency in Argyll & Bute, not simply debating the issues that have caused it.

3 Housing Emergency Summit Programme

The purpose of the Housing Emergency Summit was to bring partners together to forge commitments aimed at tackling housing shortage which maximise resources, pursue innovation, coordinate planning and target delivery. The Summit event was therefore structured around the nature of the emergency response needed, critically appraising solutions to ensure that only the most impactful and deliverable action is prioritised for delivery. The aim of the Summit was to enable partners to pledge commitment to delivering housing emergency actions and to enable the delivery of an action plan aimed at tackling housing shortage.

The programme for Housing Emergency Summit was as follows:

				
Welcome & Introduction 10.00 – 10.30 Briefing session Housing Emergency: The evidence, the impact, and the need for action	Partner perspectives on housing shortage 10.30 – 11.10 Panel session Our emergency response: What needs to happen?	Scoping solutions 11.30 – 12.00 Interactive audience session Our emergency response: What's on and off the table?	Appraising the emergency response 12.00 – 13.00 13.30 – 14.30 Interactive option appraisal workshops	Partner pledge 14.30 – 15.20 Commitments to delivery Closing plenary 15.20 – 15.30

Appendix B provides a full Housing Emergency Summit presentation materials detailing all plenary sessions.

The Summit commenced with introductions from the Leader of Argyll & Bute Council (Councillor Robin Currie) and from the Council's Head of Development and Planning (Fergus Murray). Opening remarks detailed evidence of housing shortage, its impact on Argyll & Bute's community and economy, and a call to collective action to build bold emergency responses and progressive partnership groups.

Opening remarks were followed by a panel session led by partners from Scottish Futures Trust, the Scottish Building Federation, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Shelter Scotland, who provided perspectives on the housing emergency and suggestions on the extent and nature of emergency action that should be prioritised.

Summit delegates were then invited to test with whether emerging responses should be 'on the table' or 'off the table' as an initial reaction test to a sample of the options defined in pre-Summit workshops. Informed by this, a programme of interactive session were then facilitated where delegates were asked to systematically assess a long list of options generated to tackle the housing emergency across each of the four Summit themes. Each workshop involved shortlisting the most valuable emergency response options and then carrying out an interactive option appraisal to assess the extent to which each would be impactful and deliverable. Four interactive workshops were hosted simultaneously across two rounds, enabling all delegates to participate in two interactive option appraisals. The outcome of this option appraisal was the creation of a set of housing emergency action lists for each of the four Summit themes.

The final session of the Housing Emergency Summit involved asking partners to pledge commitment to tackling the housing emergency in Argyll & Bute by considering each emergency response action and pledging delivery support where appropriate. During this networking session, partners were urged to review the list of fellow delivery partners and make introductions and connections across fellow 'emergency responders' as the first stage building partnership networks aimed at tackling Argyll & Bute's housing emergency.

3.1 The Housing Emergency Response: Scoping Solutions

Following initial plenary sessions, delegates were asked to consider emerging housing emergency responses to determine which should be prioritised for inclusion within a Housing Emergency Action Plan. Using an interactive polling system, delegates were asked whether each emergency response should 'on the table' or 'off the table' in the strategic plan to tackle housing shortage.

The sample of solutions under consideration was generated across each of the four pre-Summit workshops and represented some of the most popular ideas emerging from the debates. The outcome of this initial reaction test was intended to assess the appetite for action across a range of delivery agendas and to gauge the extent of partner consensus on priorities for action.

The outcome of the interactive voting session was as follows:

Proposed Housing Emergency Solution	On the Table	Off the Table
Pursue a more flexible approach to infrastructure, roads and design requirements in rural and island housing developments	98%	2%
Dramatically increase the number of college places for construction skills development in Argyll & Bute	100%	0%
Deliver self-build plots and mortgages	86%	14%
Freedom to use Scottish Government housing funding more flexibly and as an allocation with local administrative control	92%	8%
Create a ring-fenced Infrastructure Fund for housing development	90%	10%
Pursue Council funded housing development of low-cost homes for rent or sale	79%	21%
Support mixed tenure community led housing development through asset transfer and delivery support	77%	23%
Pursue modern methods of construction to boost affordable housing delivery	94%	6%
Deliver more MMR and low-cost homes for sale via the SHIP	91%	9%
Deliver short term workforce housing options including modular, temporary and tiny	73%	27%
Extend the use of rural housing burdens across Housing Market Areas in Argyll & Bute to maintain primary occupancy and or affordability	92%	8%
Pursue Short Term Let control areas	66%	34%
Lobby the Scottish Government to create a private sector duty for large development projects to invest in workforce housing	66%	34%

Table 3.1: Interactive polling outcomes for Housing Emergency Scoping Solutions session

A majority of partners suggested that every housing emergency response should be 'on the table', with the top 5 most popular action points identified as follows:

- Dramatically increase the number of college places for construction skills development in Argyll & Bute
- Pursue a more flexible approach to infrastructure, roads and design requirements in rural and island housing developments
- Pursue modern methods of construction to boost affordable housing delivery



- Freedom to use Scottish Government housing funding more flexibly and as an allocation with local administrative control
- Extend the use of rural housing burdens across Housing Market Areas in Argyll & Bute to maintain primary occupancy and or affordability.

Partners were particularly supportive of options which focus on boosting construction industry capacity, protecting homes as 'principal residencies' and enabling more flexibility in the planning and delivery of new build homes.

Housing emergency solutions which were raised by partners but required further discussion to take forward included:

- Pursue Council funded housing development of low-cost homes for rent or sale
- Support mixed tenure community led housing development through asset transfer and delivery support
- Deliver short term workforce housing options including modular, temporary and tiny homes
- Pursue Short Term Let control areas
- Lobby the Scottish Government to create a private sector duty for large development projects to invest in workforce housing.

The final two solutions, focusing on Short-term Let controls and private sector housing contributions, show the greater hesitation of partners in balancing the needs of the housing system in Argyll & Bute with needs of the local economy.

Overall, this polling exercise offered positive evidence of the appetite to pursue bold interventions in tackling housing shortage in Argyll & Bute, and gave a good indication of the extent of partner consensus to drive new delivery partnerships. Following this initial reaction test, partners were then invited to join interactive breakout workshops to prioritise and then systemically appraise the long list of options defined to tackle housing shortage under each of the four housing emergency themes.



4 Housing Emergency Responses: Option Appraisal

As the Housing Emergency Summit was focused on a call to action to tackle housing shortage, the main purpose of the event was to bring expert partners together to systematically assess and agree the key activity that should be prioritised as the basis of Argyll & Bute's emergency response. To ensure that Summit discussion focused purely on the need for action, four pre-Summit partner workshops were held to discuss the extent and nature of housing emergency, the barriers to tackling housing shortage, and the ideas and options which should be considered to overcome these barriers. Each workshop was attended by subject matter experts, with the outcome of each, a long-list of ideas and options for tackling the housing emergency.

The Summit option appraisal sessions were designed to shortlist from this bank of options ensuring that a focused and manageable action list was defined which could then be subject to more detailed option appraisal. Using option appraisal techniques, each option was subject to outcome analysis, appraising both the scale of impact which could be achieved and its potential deliverability. The outcome of this appraisal was to define the most deliverable and impactful options in tackling housing shortage. These options were then prioritised as the basis of a partner pledge exercise where delegates, committed to supporting delivery and influencing change, would come together to commit their time, expertise and other resources to the implementation of each.

At the outset of each option appraisal workshop, delegates were asked to review the long list of options generated at pre-Summit workshops, working together to define whether options should be 'in-scope' or 'out of scope'. 'In scope' options would then be plotted on a matrix to assess the extent to which they were most or least deliverable (on the x-axis) and high or low impact (on the y-axis).

Options which were considered to be both high impact and most deliverable were elevated for consideration by partners for inclusion within the Housing Emergency Action Plan.

Delegates were given the opportunity to attend at two of the four interactive sessions, with two rounds of activity held across four workshops running simultaneously. The outcomes of each option appraisal session are detailed below.

4.1 Workshop 1: Enabling the Delivery of More Market Homes in Argyll & Bute

Partners in Workshop 1 began the session by critically assessing the long-list of options identified to enable the delivery of more market homes in Argyll & Bute. The in-scope/out scope exercise defined a clear shortlist of options with both Group 1 and 2 unanimously agreeing that they should be considered for inclusion within a more detailed option appraisal analysis. In scope options were seen as instrumental in overcoming delivery barriers to increasing speculative building in the area, with the need for more rural-centric planning regulations, infrastructure funding, construction training and Council capacity to progress planning approvals, seen as key interventions in achieving this.

Partnership activity to develop funding and investment models which could manage risk and enable infrastructure delivery, were also seen as essential as were the wider use of rural housing burdens on new build homes.

Full details of the 'in-scope'/'out scope' exercise, including partner rationale for each assessment is set out in Table 4.1 below:

Workshop 1 Option List	In Scope	Out of Scope	Scoring rationale
Implement a more flexible approach to infrastructure, roads and design requirements on (rural)-development sites	IN	IN	Both groups unanimously agreed that this option was a major priority given the planning constraint barriers that are delaying and sometimes precluding development. Wording changed to 'implement' by Group 1 (accepted by Group 2). Also removed reference to 'rural' sites as this could apply to any development in Argyll & Bute
Assemble credible evidence of housing demand and affordability to build funder and developer confidence	OUT	IN	Priority for Group 2 as this was seen as a foundation action which would be essential in enabling developer confidence. Group 1 viewed this as a business as usual activity which could be usefully integrated into the LHS
Increase capacity within Council services key to housing development inc. Planning, Roads, Building Standards	IN	IN	Major priority for both Groups and seen as a major factor in addressing development approval delays - "This is the big problem, solve this and that's half the battle", "There's no continuity, you deal with one officer and then they're unavailable and then you're starting from scratch with someone else", "We need to be creative with the recruitment offer we make - if that needs to include accommodation, then that's what should be offered"
Dramatically increase the number of college places for construction skills development in Argyll & Bute	IN	IN	Seen as having a major impact on enabling more market supply by both groups but not a short term solution to the emergency faced. Nevertheless, this is a crucial action to build sustainability in the local construction industry longer term, and needs to be pursued
Use the CITB Impact Fund to enable industry-led solutions to stimulate development	OUT	OUT	Low level priority for both groups - The scheme is seen as being very challenging to access and unlikely to have the scale of impact needed
Include SEPA and Nature Scotland as pre-planning application consultees as standard	OUT	IN	Priority for Group 2. Group 1 would simply add SEPA and Nature Scot into the statutory consultees who will collaborate in the proposed Construction Forum
Implement a Rural & Island Housing Standard including specific infrastructure, roads and design standards	OUT	OUT	Popular in both Groups (this is perceived as a major barrier to market development) but seen as duplication of first option on implementing a more flexible approach to development requirements
Create an empowered Construction Forum bringing together all planning consultees to speed up approvals	IN	OUT	Group 1 viewed this option at having much potential in "creating a culture which is 'will do' towards development and crucial in forging relationships that will speed up the development approval process. Seen by Group 2 as 'yet another planning group?'

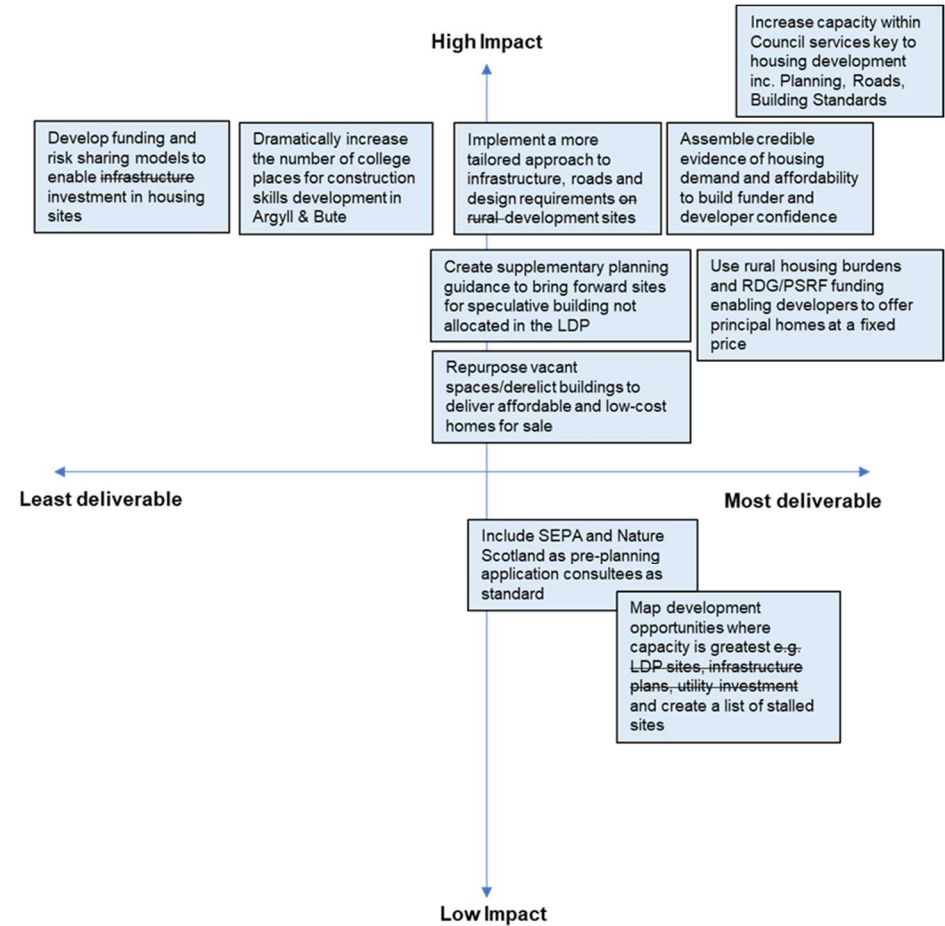
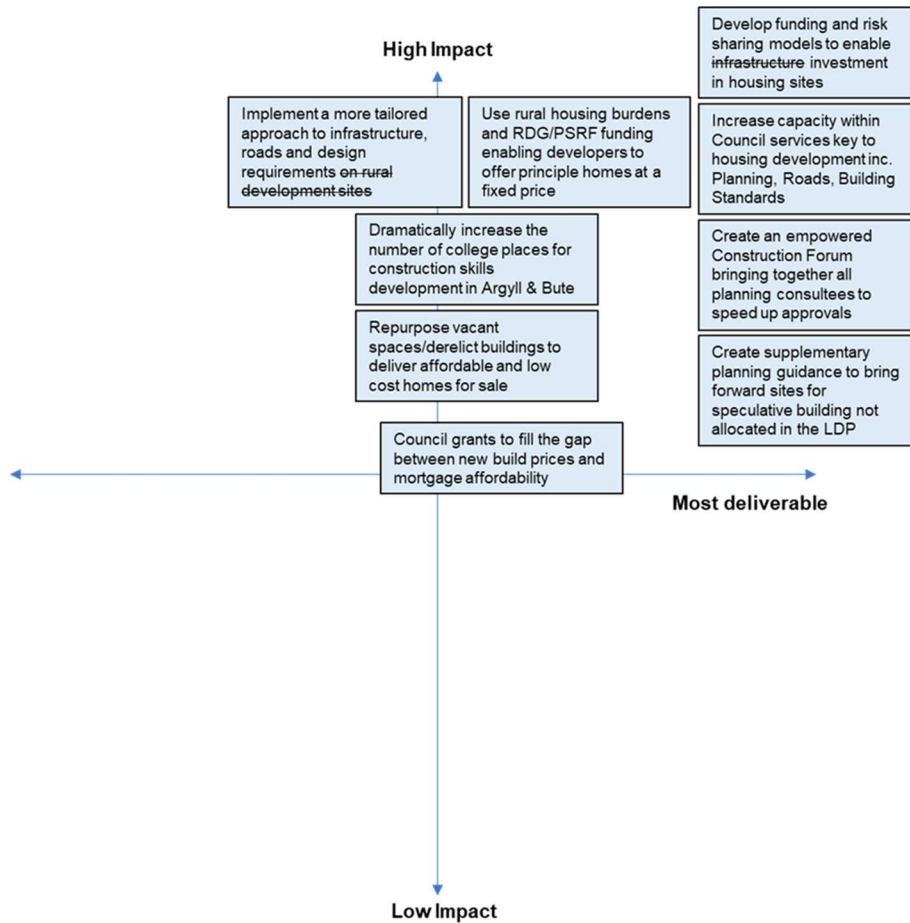
Create a list of stalled developed sites for consideration by a Housing Delivery Task Force	OUT	OUT	Group 1 viewed this option as 'business as usual' ("is this not precisely what the housing land process should be doing?"). Group 2 saw this option as useful foundation activity to drive better collaboration in seeking development approvals and merged both options
Map development opportunities where capacity is greatest and create a list of stalled development sites	OUT	IN	
Develop funding and risk sharing models to enable infrastructure investment in housing sites	IN	IN	Seen by both Groups as having major potential in unlocking development constraints, with SFT and Scottish Government support to blend funding sources and create partnership development agreements seen as crucial
Repurpose vacant spaces/derelict buildings to deliver affordable and low cost homes for sale	IN	IN	Both Groups unanimously agreed this option should be in scope as it has the potential to deliver a stronger impact than new build development. This is in relation to cost, unit numbers and environmental impact.
Compel utility companies to complete Island Community Impact Assessments on infrastructure plans	OUT	OUT	Perceived as useful but unlikely to have major short-term impact on the scale of emergency faced. Group 1 suggested that the inclusion of utility companies within a collaborative construction forum could encourage a shift to this practice
Use rural housing burdens and RDG/PSRF funding enabling developers to offer principal homes at a fixed price	IN	IN	Seen as a useful mechanisms by both groups in de-risking speculative development and also ensuring new build units are retained as principal homes
Create supplementary planning guidance to bring forward sites for speculative building not allocated in the LDP	IN	IN	In-scope for both Groups with high levels of support from market developers. Given the development cycle associated with LDP timescales, this option would enable identified sites to be released for speculative development
Deliver self-build plots and mortgages	OUT	OUT	Seen by both groups as useful but with a limited impact on the housing emergency response in the short term
Council grants to fill the gap between new build prices and mortgage affordability	IN	OUT	Group 1 viewed this option as in-scope and as a useful approach in building developer confidence and enabling the delivery of principle homes. Group 2 however questioned its value - "if the problem we're facing is a lack of speculative development, then how will offering mortgage support help? People don't need a mortgage on homes that aren't being built in the first place"



Council under-writing or pre-purchase of private speculative market housing in remote rural areas	IN	OUT	Group 1 viewed this option as in-scope and as a useful approach in building developer confidence and enabling the delivery of principal homes. Again, Group 2 questioned its value as a catalyst for more speculative development
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Table 4.1: Workshop 1 ‘In Scope’/‘Out Scope’ options for Enabling the Delivery of More Market Homes in Argyll & Bute

Each Group then used ‘in-scope’ options to assess the extent to which suggested actions were both impactful and deliverable. The outcomes of this impact exercise is detailed below:





Using the outcomes of the option appraisal session, and focusing on actions screened as having the potential to be both impactful and deliverable, a list of actions was developed as the basis of developing the Housing Emergency Action Plan to 'enable the delivery of more market homes' as follows:

1. Implement a more flexible approach to infrastructure, roads and design requirements on development sites
2. Increase capacity within Council services key to housing development inc. Planning, Roads, Building Standards
3. Dramatically increase the number of college places for construction skills development in Argyll & Bute
4. Develop funding and risk sharing models to enable infrastructure investment in housing sites
5. Repurpose vacant spaces/derelict buildings to deliver homes for sale or rent
6. Use rural housing burdens and RDG/PSRF funding enabling developers to offer principal homes at a fixed price
7. Create supplementary planning guidance to bring forward sites for speculative building not allocated in the LDP
8. Create an empowered Construction Forum bringing together all planning consultees to speed up decision making.

4.2 Workshop 2: Enabling the Delivery of More Affordable Homes in Argyll & Bute

Partners in Workshop 2 began the session by critically assessing the long-list of options identified to enable the delivery of more affordable homes in Argyll & Bute. The in-scope/out scope exercise defined a clear shortlist of options with both Group 1 and 2 unanimously agreeing that they should be considered for inclusion within a more detailed option appraisal analysis.

In scope options were seen as instrumental in overcoming delivery barriers to Strategic Housing Investment Plan delivery, including improving infrastructure planning, planning policy and master-planning development and more flexibility in funding management. Enabling the delivery of more community led housing and intermediate housing projects were also identified as important delivery activities.

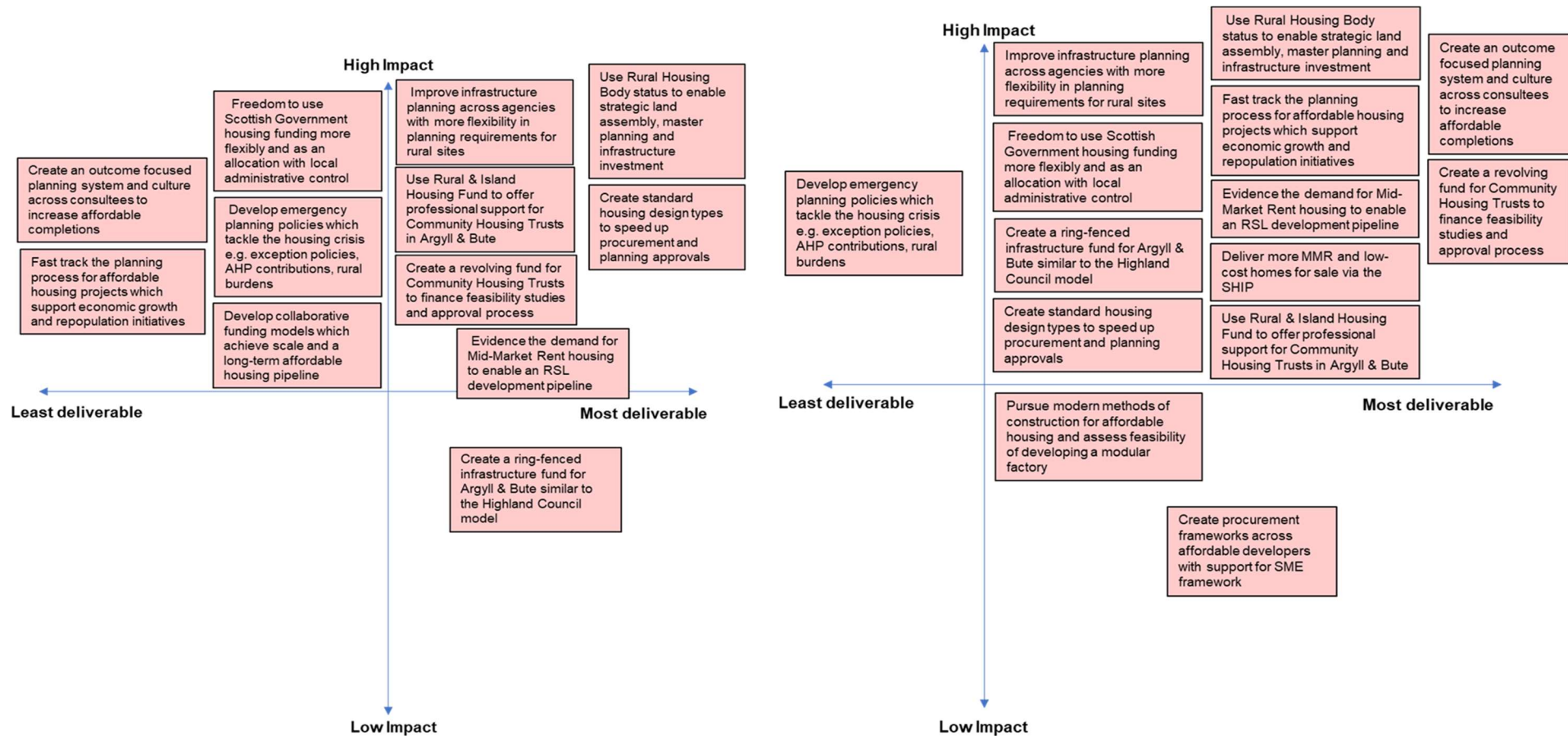
Full details of the 'in-scope'/'out scope' exercise, including partner rationale for each assessment are set out in Table 4.2 below:

Workshop 2 Option List	In Scope	Out of Scope	Scoring rationale
Develop collaborative funding models which achieve scale and a long-term affordable housing pipeline	IN	OUT	Group 1 agreed that there was a need to test further innovative funding mechanisms to enable more affordable homes to be built but scored it as least deliverable as part of the matrix. Partners in Group 2 did not include this within scope as it was suggested that the issue was more to do with land assembly and testing this option would not produce fast results.
Create standard housing design types to speed up procurement and planning approvals	IN	IN	Consensus in both Group 1 and 2 that the development of standard housing types could help deliver change and speed up procurement and planning processes. It could fast-track design stages and is proven to work in the private sector so therefore is deliverable.
Create procurement frameworks across affordable developers with support for SME engagement	OUT	OUT	Group 1 felt that procurement frameworks were already in place and barriers were as a result of contractors choosing to tender for more profitable sites (in the central belt). Group 2 agreed that it would be difficult to change legislation and barriers were more about contractor appetite.
Create a ring fenced infrastructure fund for Argyll & Bute similar to the Highland Council model	IN	IN	Both Group 1 and 2 agreed this would provide more flexibility and target resources. However, it was noted that the Ring Fenced Budget was not always successfully implemented in Highland Council. It was also highlighted in Group 2 that the Scottish Housing Fund could be applied more flexibly.
Improve infrastructure planning across agencies with more flexibility in planning requirements for rural sites	IN	IN	Both Group 1 and 2 noted that one of the greatest obstacles was lead in times for infrastructure and agreed a more collaborative approach across agencies could significantly improve timescales.
Pursue modern methods of construction for affordable housing and assess feasibility of developing a modular factory	IN	OUT	Majority of partners in Group 1 felt that modern methods were being piloted with lessons still to be learned, therefore there is a degree of risk with this activity. Group 2 stated that there would be difficulties in the short to medium term to find a site and base a factory in Argyll & Bute. There were mixed views in Group 2, particularly from the Modular Construction Sector asserting that this action could have a significant impact on delivery.
Create an outcome focused planning system and culture across consultees to increase affordable completions	IN	IN	Both Group 1 and 2 were in favour of a more collaborative outcome focused approach to avoid silo working and speed up processes. Group 1 thought that this would take longer to deliver while Group 2 ranked this as both high impact and most deliverable.
Freedom to use Scottish Government housing funding more flexibly and as an allocation with local administrative control	IN	IN	Both Group 1 and 2 agreed that more freedom to use SG housing fund could target resources more to a local and community level but acknowledged it would require legislative change which could be time consuming and less deliverable.

Fast track the planning process for affordable housing projects which support economic growth and repopulation initiatives	IN	IN	Both Group 1 and 2 agreed that in theory this could assist with delivery of more homes with Group 1 suggesting it would be less deliverable than Group 2. Group 1 highlighted that this activity could impact on the delivery of more market homes which were also important
Use Rural Housing Body status to enable land assembly, master planning and infrastructure investment	IN	IN	Partners in Group 1 and 2 agreed that as Rural Housing Body status has now been confirmed by the Scottish Government, that this option should be taken forward as a key priority to assist with land assembly.
Develop emergency planning policies which tackle the housing crisis e.g. exception policies, AHP contributions, rural burdens	IN	IN	Both Groups 1 and 2 agreed that there is a need to review all planning policies in the context of the Housing Emergency declaration in Argyll & Bute to ensure they are targeted at the delivery of more affordable homes and that gaps are identified and addressed.
Create a revolving fund for Community Housing Trusts to finance feasibility studies and approval process	IN	IN	Partners in Group 1 and 2 who had been involved in Community-led Housing Models agreed that a revolving fund could assist with scaling up the development of affordable housing by Community Development Trusts
Use Rural & Island Housing Fund to offer professional support for Community Housing Trusts	IN	IN	Partners in Group 1 and 2 who have been involved in community-led development agreed that funding for professional support could have a significant impact. However, both Groups felt that the options for revolving funding and professional support should be one activity.
Support mixed tenure community led housing development through asset transfer and delivery support	OUT	OUT	Group 1 felt that the was already being delivered and Group 2 did not choose this to be in scope.
Deliver more MMR and low-cost homes for sale via the SHIP	IN	IN	Agreed that this option was required, but that a requirement to evidence the demand for MMR as an initial action is essential.
Evidence the demand for Mid-Market Rent housing to enable an RSL development pipeline	IN	IN	There was agreement that there was a need for more detailed analysis of the demand for MMR to help inform future provision across Argyll & Bute. Both Group 1 & 2 agreed that both options should be one activity with delivery building on a better understanding demand.
Develop a Joint Venture model for Council Building for Rent and Sale (CBRS) in partnership with market developers	OUT	OUT	Neither Group 1 or 2 put this option in scope as partners considered it would take too long to implement due to legal uncertainty and furthermore would be unlikely to work in Argyll & Bute

Table 4.2: Workshop 2 'In Scope'/'Out Scope' options for Enabling the Delivery of More Affordable Homes in Argyll & Bute

Each Group then used 'in-scope' options to assess the extent to which suggested actions were both impactful and deliverable. The outcomes of this impact exercise is detailed below:





Using the outcomes of the option appraisal session, and focusing on actions screened as having the potential to be both impactful and deliverable, a list of actions was developed as the basis of developing the Housing Emergency Action Plan to 'enable the delivery of more affordable homes' as follows:

- 1 Create standard housing design types to speed up procurement and planning approvals
- 2 Create a ring fenced infrastructure fund for Argyll & Bute similar to the Highland Council model
- 3 Improve infrastructure planning across agencies
- 4 Freedom to use Scottish Government housing funding more flexibly and as an allocation with local administrative control
- 5 Fast track the planning process for affordable housing projects which support economic growth and repopulation initiatives
- 6 Use Rural Housing Body status to enable land assembly, master planning and infrastructure investment
- 7 Develop emergency planning policies which tackle the housing crisis e.g. exception policies, AHP contributions, rural burdens
- 8 Create a revolving fund for Community Housing Trusts to finance feasibility studies and approval process
- 9 Use Rural & Island Housing Fund to offer professional support for Community Housing Trusts
- 10 Evidence the demand for Mid-Market Rent housing to enable an RSL development pipeline.

4.3 Workshop 3: Enabling the Delivery of More Homes for Argyll & Bute's Workforce

Partners in Workshop 3 began the session by critically assessing the long-list of options identified to enable the delivery of more workforce housing in Argyll & Bute. The in-scope/out scope exercise defined a clear shortlist of options with both Group 1 and 2 unanimously agreeing that they should be considered for inclusion within a more detailed option appraisal analysis.

These options were seen as instrumental in overcoming delivery barriers to enabling the supply of workforce housing including building evidence of housing need across employment sectors, improving strategic planning, and supporting the delivery of short term, temporary and seasonal workforce housing options. Creating opportunities for workforce housing via building reuse and Mid-Market Rent delivery models were also identified as important delivery activities.

Full details of the 'in-scope'/'out scope' exercise, including partner rationale for each assessment are set out in Table 4.3 below:

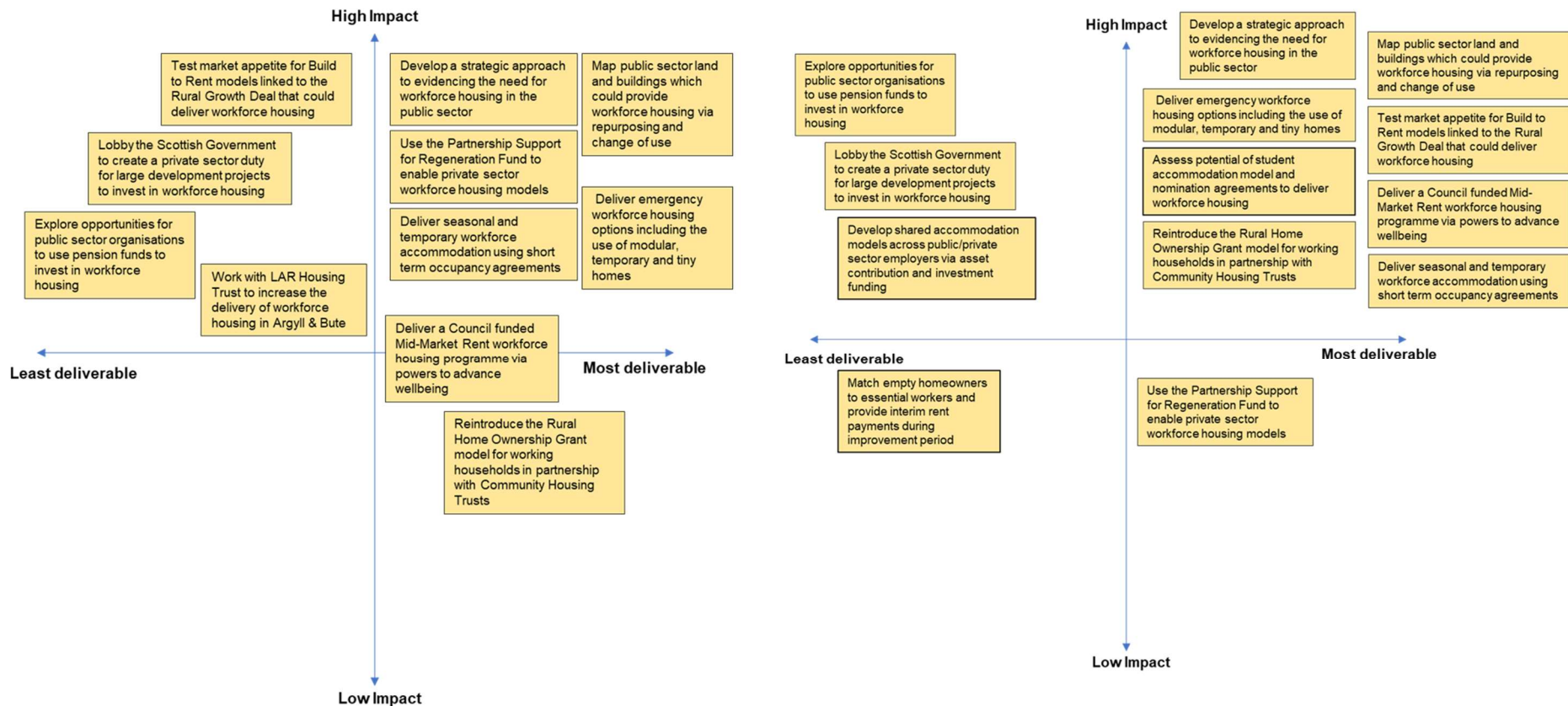
Workshop 3 Option List	In Scope	Out of Scope	Scoring rationale
Work with LAR Housing Trust to increase the delivery of workforce housing in Argyll & Bute	IN	OUT	Group 1 were keen to explore using the LAR model but noted this can also be delivered by other agencies and providers
Assess potential of student accommodation model and nomination agreements to deliver workforce housing	OUT	IN	Group 2 noted this type of model is not suitable for relocating families. Both Groups noted they would like to see the delivery of more tied housing that is linked to employment although that can create complexities when people change employer.
Deliver seasonal and temporary workforce accommodation using short term occupancy agreements	IN	IN	Both Groups felt this could free up permanent housing for full time residents. There is currently no legal basis for Short Term Occupancy agreements in Scotland so this would need a different mechanism. Pursuing this option would show there is demand for this type of housing.
Develop a strategic approach to evidencing the need for workforce housing in the public sector	IN	IN	Group 1 emphasised the need to understand where the data gaps are, why this insight is needed and who would use it, but acknowledged it does underpin all the other actions. Lots of information is already available but perhaps not widely shared. Group 2 stressed the need for Argyll & Bute specific evidence as this would help with funding bids. It was suggested this activity is more about about continuing with the evidence gathering that already exists rather than developing new data.
Develop an HMO partnership model which enables employers to invest in workforce housing units	OUT	OUT	Both Groups agreed that this is not a long term sustainable housing solution or a desirable option for working age households.
Match empty home owners to essential workers and provide interim rent payments during improvement period	OUT	IN	Group 1 suggested that this option would essentially reward owners who fail to invest and maintain their homes. There are better uses for public sector funding
Deliver emergency workforce housing options including the use of modular, temporary and tiny homes	IN	IN	Group 1 were keen to remove the reference to temporary housing. Both Groups were supportive of using the Glasgow Commonwealth Games approach where housing legacy was created from temporary homes. This option requires fast track planning to work and there would be a need to house construction workers first who can then build the rest.

Deliver a Council funded Mid-Market Rent workforce housing programme via powers to advance wellbeing	IN	IN	Group 1 noted this option should not just focus on Council funded development but use wider partners. It was noted however that reduced subsidy levels could be detrimental to this. Group 2 suggested that the demand for MMR is linked to market failure. We need to understand and demonstrate clearly where there is demand. The LAR approach could be considered as a delivery model.
Explore opportunities for public sector organisations to use pension funds to invest in workforce housing	IN	OUT	Group 1 noted that public and private sector organisations should be considered for the use of pension funds. Group 2 observed that this option would be rating reliant. It was suggested that funding is not the biggest barrier to delivery and that there are other funding mechanisms available to support the delivery of workforce housing.
Create a rural resettlement fund to enable households to relocate to Argyll & Bute	OUT	OUT	Partners in Group 1 reported that this option had been tried and tested before and didn't deliver the outcomes needed, in fact "it needs to be off the board completely". Group 2 partners also referred to a previous model which was considered too restrictive – "it wasn't inter regional so didn't support those wishing to move within Argyll & Bute". Those moving to the area needed to have a job offer before accessing support.
Map public sector land and buildings which could provide workforce housing via repurposing and change of use	IN	IN	Partners suggested this option should consider not just public sector land and buildings but private sector too and that it needs to be part of a wider master planning approach. Land mapping is in progress in Argyll & Bute but needs completion. It should be noted that there are positive climate change implications but that landfill costs/disposals may be a barrier especially on islands.
Use the Partnership Support for Regeneration Fund to enable private sector workforce housing models	IN	IN	This mechanism currently exists but needs better promotion. Group 2 suggested that there is a need for a better understanding of the capabilities and potential scale that could be delivered from this funding scheme. It was noted that there is an example in the south of Skye recently that would be worth reviewing but that it was likely that limited funds would be available and sole use for workforce housing may be a barrier.
Reintroduce the Rural Home Ownership Grant model for working households in partnership with Community Housing Trusts	IN	IN	Whilst supportive, Group 1 noted that this option would need to deliver a redesigned scheme as previous versions were an 'administrative nightmare' and too restrictive. There is a potential to pilot this model in Tiree and work with Crofting Commission. Group 2 asserted that a just reintroduction of RHOG was needed and could combine with local housing burdens to safeguard affordable homes for working age households.
Develop shared accommodation models across public/private sector employers via asset contribution and investment funding	OUT	IN	Group 2 were supportive of this option noting it could maximise existing funding if partners could blend from different sources.

Lobby the Scottish Government to create a private sector duty for large development projects to invest in workforce housing	IN	IN	Whilst both Groups were supportive, Group 2 noted this option could stifle investment. It should also be noted that employers are already interested in helping to solve the problem so they can secure the workforce they need. Perhaps this option is more about community benefit clauses attached to planning rather than a duty?
Develop a social enterprise company focused on developing and maintaining workforce housing	OUT	OUT	Partners suggested that the last thing needed is another group to be set up and governed. RSLs already have powers to do this.
Test market appetite for Build to Rent models linked to the Rural Growth Deal that could deliver workforce housing	IN	IN	Whilst both Groups were supportive of this option, it was noted that this activity was already progressing in Argyll & Bute
Unblock the ready to go sites stopped as a result of infrastructure constraints	IN	N/A	This option was added as new workforce housing solution in the Group 1 workshop

Table 4.3: Workshop 3 'In Scope'/'Out Scope' options for Enabling the Delivery of More Homes for Argyll & Bute's Workforce

Each Group then used 'in-scope' options to assess whether suggested actions were both impactful and deliverable. The outcomes of this impact exercise is detailed below:





Using the outcomes of the option appraisal session, and focusing on actions screened as having the potential to be both impactful and deliverable, a list of actions was developed as the basis of developing the Housing Emergency Action Plan to 'enable the delivery of more homes for Argyll & Bute's workforce' as follows:

- 1 Deliver seasonal and temporary workforce accommodation using short term occupancy agreements (SFT focus)
- 2 Develop a strategic approach to evidencing the need for workforce housing in the public sector
- 3 Deliver emergency workforce housing options including the use of modular, temporary and tiny homes
- 4 Deliver a Council funded Mid-Market Rent workforce housing programme via powers to advance wellbeing
- 5 Map Identify public sector land and buildings which could provide workforce housing via repurposing and change of use
- 6 Use the Partnership Support for Regeneration Fund to enable private sector workforce housing models
- 7 Reintroduce the Rural Home Ownership Grant model for working households in partnership with Community Housing Trusts.

4.4 Workshop 4: Making the Best Use of Existing Homes in Argyll & Bute

Partners in Workshop 4 began the session by critically assessing the long-list of options identified to enable better use of existing homes in Argyll & Bute. The in-scope/out scope exercise defined a clear shortlist of options with both Group 1 and 2 unanimously agreeing that they should be considered for inclusion within a more detailed option appraisal analysis. In scope options were seen as instrumental in making the best use of existing homes in Argyll & Bute through enabling building reuse and refurbishment, plus improving housing options through allocation policy development and specialist housing models. Reducing the number of ineffective homes in Argyll & Bute and creating opportunities to maximise the number of existing dwellings for use as a primary occupancy was also seen as central to maximising the impact of existing homes in the area.

Full details of the 'in-scope'/'out scope' exercise, including partner rationale for each assessment are set out in Table 4.4 below:

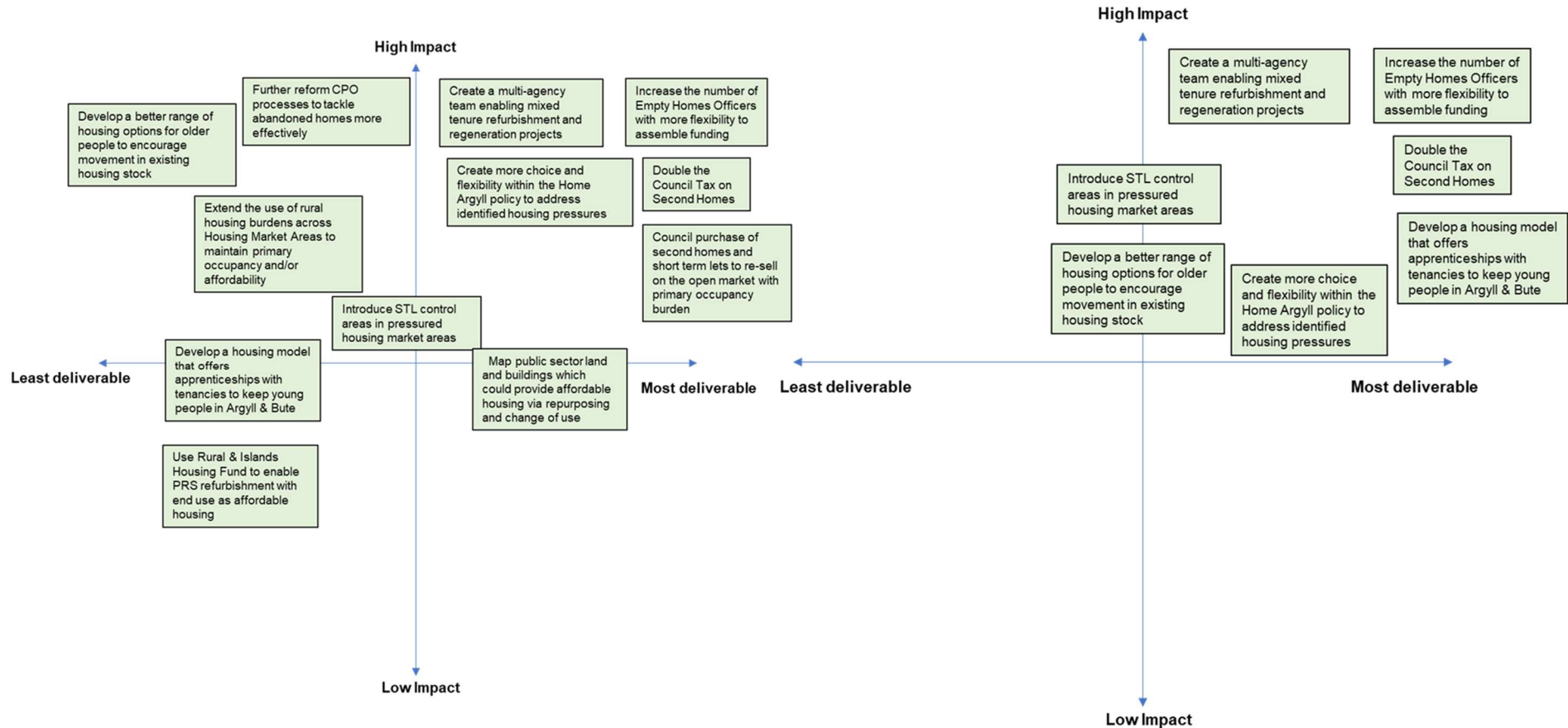
Workshop 4 Option List	In Scope	Out of Scope	Scoring rationale
Further reform CPO processes to tackle abandoned homes more effectively	IN	IN	Both Group 1 and 2 unanimously agreed the CPO process is long, laborious and urgently needs to be reviewed. This is also the case for Compulsory Sales Orders too.
Create a multi-agency team enabling mixed tenure refurbishment and regeneration projects	IN	IN	Partners agreed that this option needs more than just a single multi agency team - it needs collaboration across all partners, owners and geographies. The right partners must be in the room contributing to investment decisions, including a multi-agency approach to net zero compliance issues
Reduce disabled grant title conditions from 10 to 5 years to improve take up of adaptations	OUT	OUT	Option not perceived to assist with the housing emergency by either Group 1 or 2
Use Rural & Islands Housing Fund to enable PRS refurbishment with end use as affordable housing	IN	IN	Whilst some partners questioned providing funding to private landlords ('it should be their responsibility to carry out the work required'), the counter-argument suggests that we need to retain and support private landlords. The struggle to achieve national standards in older properties is forcing landlords leave the sector. Partners agreed for the need to lobby government to review the taxation framework for the PRS, as well as property standards.
Reintroduce an equity loans scheme to enable property improvements in private sector homes	OUT	OUT	The general view in both Groups was that most households are vary about considering equity loans particularly in such an unstable economic period and that this option would not be effective
Adapt void or long term empty RSL stock to meet accessibility standards	OUT	OUT	Partners noted that there are not many long term void properties and that property buy backs may work better rather than converting hard to let homes. Furthermore, not all empty properties may be suitable for adaptations or extensions e.g. flats.
Develop a housing model that offers apprenticeships with tenancies to keep young people in Argyll & Bute	IN	IN	This option was positively received by both Group 1 and 2. Partners agreed that more flexibility is needed in the allocations policy to do this but that this could be put in place quickly. It was noted that partnership working between social landlords and further education institutions would be instrumental in making this option a success
Create more choice and flexibility within the Home Argyll policy to address identified housing pressures	IN	IN	This option is already in progress (e.g. allowing single applicants to be offered 2 bed properties). Having said that, partners suggested further flexibility would allow other actions to be introduced i.e. the apprenticeship/home scheme

Increase the number of Empty Homes Officers with more flexibility to assemble funding	IN	IN	This option was assessed as in scope for both Group 1 and 2. The work of the empty homes team is recognised as making a significant impact in bringing properties back into use in Argyll & Bute and the more resources involved the better. This option is already underway by Argyll & Bute Council
Develop a better range of housing options for older people to encourage movement in existing housing stock	IN	IN	Despite a discussion around housing for older people in Oban which is difficult to let, partners acknowledged that this option could be successful if demand is evidenced. Both Group 1 and 2 were keen to progress this option, not just focusing on sheltered or amenity housing but also other adapted properties. It was also acknowledged that further discussion is needed around incentive to move schemes for current tenants who are under occupying their tenancy to allow them to move on and free up family accommodation
Introduce STL control areas in pressured housing market areas	IN	IN	This option was assessed as in scope for both Group 1 and 2 although both groups were clear that a completely evidenced based approach to restrictions would be necessary. It was acknowledged that this analysis is underway with data is being gathered to determine which areas should be considered as future control zones.
Double the Council Tax on Second Homes	IN	IN	Partners noted that this option will be implemented from April 2024, but questions remain over how will this impact on the housing system and whether further increases can be considered
Develop a coordinated advice, finance and support model to encourage PRS landlords to enter and remain in the sector	OUT	OUT	This option was assessed as out of scope for both Group 1 and 2. Partners noted that this options does not represent the real problem facing the PRS which is driven by the taxation framework for landlords and the condition and energy standards imposed on the sector by the Scottish Government. Landlords are struggling to achieve property standards given the current economics of the PRS.
Council purchase of second homes and short term lets to re-sell on the open market with primary occupancy burden	IN	IN	Whilst partners were very supportive of this option, it was noted that it is already being delivered to a degree with RSL's buying back homes through open market purchases to achieve a majority share in common dwellings.
Enable second homeowners to offer seasonal or temporary accommodation options to essential workers	OUT	IN	Questions were raised by Group 1 over how this option would work including the needs for licenses, policies and leasing agreements. Group 2 were more supportive of this idea but question how could this could be achieved given that short assured tenancies have been replaced by private residential tenancies.

Map public sector land and buildings which could provide affordable housing via repurposing and change of use	IN	IN	Group 2 suggested adding 'private' as well as public to enhance the potential impact of this option.
Extend the use of rural housing burdens across Housing Market Areas to maintain primary occupancy and/or affordability	IN	IN	Both Group 1 and 2 were supportive of this option and achievement of rural housing body status for Argyll & Bute Council should make the deliverability of this option high.

Table 4.: Workshop 3 'In Scope'/'Out Scope' options for Enabling the Delivery of More Homes for Argyll & Bute's Workforce

Each workshop Group then used 'in-scope' options to assess whether suggested actions were both impactful and deliverable. The outcomes of this impact exercise is detailed below:





Using the outcomes of the option appraisal session, and focusing on actions screened as having the potential to be both impactful and deliverable, a list of actions was developed as the basis of developing the Housing Emergency Action Plan to 'make the best use of existing homes in Argyll & Bute' as follows:

- 1 Further reform CPO processes to tackle abandoned homes more effectively
- 2 Create a multi-agency teams enabling mixed tenure refurbishment and regeneration projects
- 3 Develop a housing model that offers apprenticeships with tenancies to keep young people in Argyll & Bute
- 4 Create more choice and flexibility within the Home Argyll policy to address identified housing pressures
- 5 Increase the number of Empty Homes Officers with more flexibility to assemble funding
- 6 Develop a better range of housing options for older people to encourage movement in existing housing stock
- 7 Map public sector land and buildings which could provide affordable housing via repurposing and change of use
- 8 Introduce STL control areas in pressured housing market areas
- 9 Double the Council Tax on Second Homes
- 10 Council purchase of second homes and short term lets to re-sell on the open market with primary occupancy burden.

5 Housing Emergency Partner Pledges

As the Housing Emergency Summit was intended as a partnership call to action, the most important aspect of the event focused on a partner pledge activity. Following the appraisal and priority assessment of options, delegates were invited to review the shortlist of housing emergency actions and to commit their planning and delivery support to those they were most keen to see implemented.

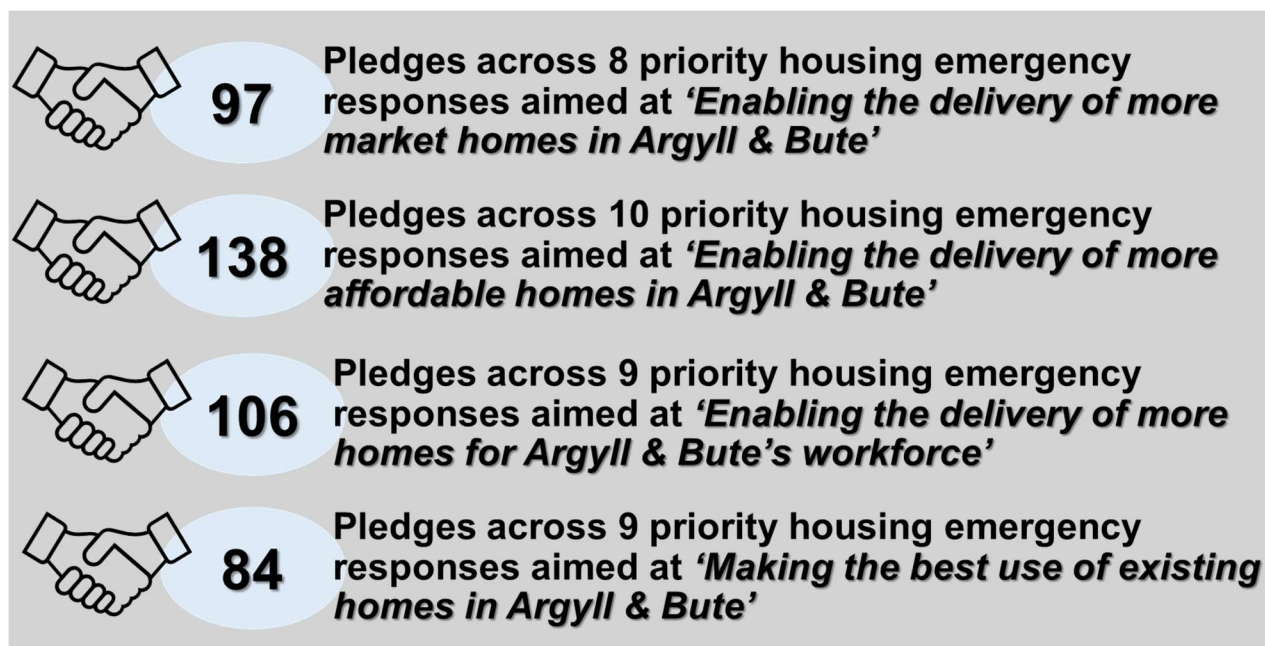
The shortlists of housing emergency actions were presented on exhibition boards for delegate review. Partners were invited to review each shortlist and to place a partner pledge sticker against the actions they were most committed to delivering.

Partners were also encouraged to network during this interactive session, identifying fellow delivery partners who could form new partnership groups working on specific programmes as part of the wider Housing Emergency Action Plan.

The outcomes of this session are detailed in Appendix C which sets out partner pledges against each housing emergency action.

Undoubtedly this exercise proved to be successful in building strong partnership networks focused on the collection action needed to tackle the housing emergency in Argyll & Bute.

In total, 425 partnership pledges were received across four Housing Emergency themes including:



These partnership pledges will inform the delivery of a Housing Emergency Action Plan which details the activity, timescales, committed resources and partnership networks associated with each action.



6 Housing Emergency Summit Outcomes & Next Steps

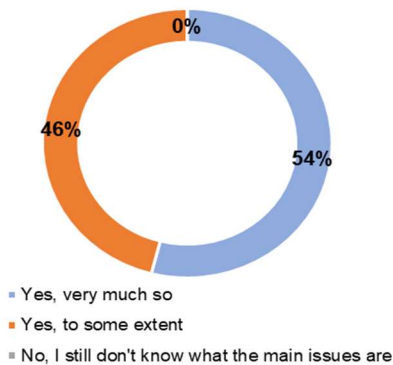
The Argyll & Bute Housing Emergency Summit was the first event of its kind in Scotland. It was designed to bring partners together as a response to the Council’s call to action to tackle housing shortage. The Summit acknowledged the scale and impact of the housing emergency on Argyll & Bute’s communities and economy and encouraged partners to commit to collective action across a diverse partnership of house builders, landlords, funders, business leaders and public sector bodies.

To that end, partnership delivery planning prioritised the implementation of 39 housing emergency actions aimed at tackling housing shortage.

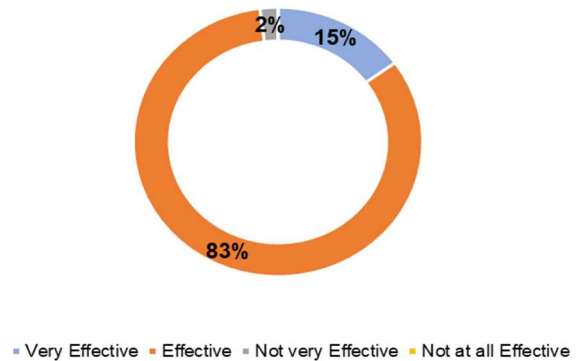
Furthermore, over 400 partnership pledges were made by delegates committed to taking the bold and progressive action needed to address the housing emergency.

At the close of the Summit, partners were invited to share their views of the extent to which the event created a positive start to the process of collectively tackling the housing emergency in Argyll & Bute. Using an interactive polling tool, partners were invited to evaluate the outcomes achieved and offer their expectations for the future. The outcomes of this evaluation exercise is detailed below:

Has today’s event improved your understanding of the Housing Emergency response that partners need to take?



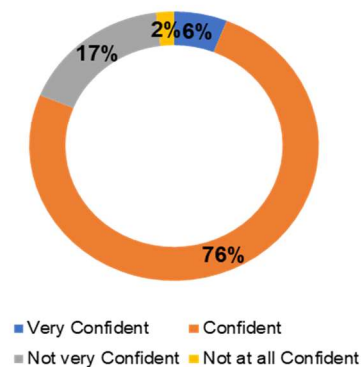
How effective has today’s event been in scoping solutions and forging commitments to tackling housing shortage?



How would you rate today’s event in encouraging the development of partnerships to tackle housing shortage?



Based on today’s Summit, how confident are you that Housing Emergency solutions can tackle housing shortage ?





These evaluation outcomes suggest that the Summit was successful in coordinating the collective and bold action needed to tackle housing shortage, as follows:

- 100% of Summit delegates leaving with an improved understanding of the housing emergency response needed to tackle housing shortage
- 97% of Summit delegates satisfied that the Summit has been successful in scoping solutions and forging partnerships
- 88% Summit delegates rating new partnership development opportunities as 'excellent' or 'good'
- 93% of Summit delegate showing some confidence that the emergency responses identified can tackle housing shortage.

The outcomes of the Housing Emergency Summit will be used to develop an Action Plan as the basis of ongoing planning, activity, investment and partnership. Housing Emergency Action points will be refined, partnership commitments focused, timescales proposed, and resources commitment scoped in early 2024.

A final version of the Argyll & Bute Housing Emergency Action will be launched across Housing Summit partners by Spring 2024.

Management Committee**Date: 10 April 2024****Agenda Item:**

Area Community Planning Groups – January/February 2024 Meetings**1. Purpose**

This paper presents key matters arising during the Area Community Planning Group meetings that were held in January and February 2024.

2. Recommendations

The Management Committee is asked to:

- a) note the highlights detailed at section 4 of the report.
- b) note that Sarah Davies (Helensburgh Community Council/Fun First/Plastic Free Helensburgh) was appointed to the position of Chair of the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Community Planning Group and that the Group will seek to appoint a new Vice-Chair at the next scheduled meeting.
- c) note that Jean Moffat (Bute Community Council) was appointed to the position of Chair of the Bute and Cowal Area Community Planning Group.
- d) note that the position of Chair of the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Community Planning Group remains vacant; and
- e) note the concerns of the Bute and Cowal Area Community Planning Group regarding Police Scotland proposals to close a number of properties across the country, referenced within the ongoing 'Shaping The Future of Our Estate' consultation, specifically Greenock Police Station.

3. Background

There are four Area Community Planning Groups, one in each of the Council's administrative areas (Bute and Cowal; Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands; Helensburgh and Lomond; and Oban, Lorn and the Isles).

Meetings were held on a variety of platforms, including purely virtual and on a hybrid basis using Microsoft Teams. Prior to the meetings discussion took place with the Area Chairs and Vice Chairs and a standard agenda template was agreed. All 4 meetings were well attended by a variety of partners.

4. Highlights

All Groups considered:

- Area Community Planning Group Governance Arrangements

The annual review of the Terms of Reference and the Membership of each Group and, the dates of future meetings, up until May 2025.

- Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership - Public Health Update

Consideration was given to a public health update from Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership's Public Health Team on the ongoing wellbeing and prevention activities overseen and delivered by them in Argyll and Bute. The update provided information on the Argyll and Bute Public Health Annual Report; the development of children and young people's health and wellbeing profiles; ongoing health and wellbeing profile workshops; the Cool2Talk online support service for young people; and the annual Director of Public Health Report.

- Presentation on Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Profiles

Jennifer Dryden, Health Improvement Lead from Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership's Public Health Team delivered a presentation on the Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Profile. The presentations provided information in relation to the Profile themes; the purposes of the Profiles; the layout of the report and how to navigate it; the reasons for any gaps in the Profiles; and the type of data in the Profiles and ways in which this could be used by partners.

- Draft Argyll and Bute Community Justice Plan 2023-2027

The Groups considered a presentation which provided information regarding the draft Argyll and Bute Community Justice Plan 2023-27. The presentation provided details in relation to the National Strategy for Community Justice; the core membership of the Community Justice Partnership; the overall strategic context of the Vision for Justice in Scotland and National Strategy for Community Justice; the development of the Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan; the Community Justice Pathways Assessment process; and the timescales for the consultation and publication of the plan.

- Area Plans Update

The Corporate Support Manager from Argyll and Bute Council delivered a presentation to each Group in relation to the Council's Area Plans. The presentation provided background information in relation to the Plans, as well as details of the 8 Locality Plans across Argyll and Bute. The presentation also included context about the scope of the Plans; the importance of community engagement and efficient use of resources in the development of the plans; the overall approach, governance and phasing of the Plan's development; and the ways in which information from the development of the Plans would be utilised.

The Corporate Support Manager noted that it was hoped that the Area Plans would maximise opportunities for funding for local projects. It was anticipated that the Plans would be developed and owned by the communities and that the Area Community Planning Groups would have an important part to play in the development of them.

- Climate Change Working Group Update

The Groups considered a report from the Climate Change Project Manager, which provided an update on the Community Planning Partnership's Argyll and Bute Climate Action project. The update included information in relation to the background and work of the Climate Change Working Group; funding requirements to support the implementation of a Climate Change Project Manager post; an overview of the work of the Climate Change Project Manager to date and future plans.

- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Update

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service delivered a report outlining the FQ3 review of local performance across each locality for the period 2023-24. The report included information on the local firefighter training plan; incidents during this time period; unwanted fire alarm signals; road and water safety campaigns; community engagement activities; East and West Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Local Senior Officer Activities and home fire safety visits.

- Police Scotland Update

Consideration was given to an update which provided information on the ongoing work of Police Scotland and information on yearly crime statistics; fraud prevention and awareness, specifically relating to scam calls; personal safety inputs provided to Lomond and Argyll Advocacy Service staff; the success at the Divisional Recognition Awards 2023 and the support on the 16 days Against Gender Based Violence campaign.

The Bute and Cowal Area Community Planning Group discussed the ongoing consultation concerning proposals to close a number of Police Scotland properties across the country. Partners raised various concerns over the anticipated loss of services within the Bute and Cowal locality and neighbouring divisions and agreed that these concerns be raised at the Management Committee.

- Live Argyll Community Learning Services Update

The Live Argyll Community Learning Services Update provided information on the HMI Community Learning and Development Progress Visit; the newly elected Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and the independent review of Community Learning and Development which has been actioned by the Minister for Higher Education, Further Education and Skills.

- Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface (TSI)

Argyll and Bute TSI provided an update on their recent work including information on grants from the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund 2023-24; the commissioning of a Community Wealth Building strategy and action plan as part of the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership; funding available from the Argyll and Bute Climate Action Network Fund; consultation and development of a TSI Strategy for 2024-29; the launch of the new TSI website on 20th February; and work with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations on a fairer funding campaign.

- Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau

Argyll and Bute Citizen's Advice Bureau provided statistical information on the number of clients who had contacted the Bureau between January and December 2023; the Volunteer Advisor training programme; the annual programme of energy efficiency advice sessions and services that the Bureau provide. The update also confirmed that last year the Bureau assisted 2000 clients which resulted in £1.5m financial gain. Jen Broadhurst highlighted that the Bureau was in the process of updating their Development Plan for the next 3 years and would welcome input from elected members and community representative groups.

- UHI Argyll Update (Bute and Cowal, Helensburgh and Lomond and Oban, Lorn and the Isles)

Consideration was given to a written update from UHI Argyll. The update included information on January start courses that are available; the multiply programme which aims to support adults with no or low level maths skills get back into work and the open day held on 11 January which was well attended at both the Dunoon and Rothesay Centres.

- Includem – Youth Justice (Bute and Cowal and Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands)

Consideration was given to a presentation by David Gould, Associate Researcher, Includem, in relation to Includem's ADAPT Research Project. Information was provided in relation to Includem's backroad as a Scottish charity dedicated to providing 24-hour, one-to-one support for young people and their families/carers and

their normal operating processes when assisting young people who may be in conflict with the law.

Bute & Cowal (Meeting Papers - [LINK](#))

Consideration was given to an update from Alex Wilde and Becky Hothersall from Shaping Places for Wellbeing Dunoon. The update provided information on inequality groups; how they share their learning; Place and Wellbeing Assessments and training opportunities and the Active Travel Plan for Dunoon.

Rhyddian Knight of Friends of Glenan Wood advised that the woodlands is 148 hectares of unique Atlantic temperate rainforest which is managed by a small volunteer board in which he is the only full time employee and that his role is primarily community engagement. Mr Knight advised that they have finalised their programme for the year and are working on rebuilding their website to include an online booking page. Rhyddian highlighted that the location of the woodlands is on the Cowal Way and beside the ferry terminal which brings opportunities for visitors as well as locals. It was noted that funding is a challenge for the woodlands.

Helensburgh & Lomond (Meeting Papers - [LINK](#))

PC Drew Omand of the Ministry of Defence Police provided a written update that highlighted that the storms over the last few weeks had caused disruption in the area around His Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde and surrounding roads and that there has also been an increase of drone pilots around HMNB Clyde/Coullport which is a security concern and advised that any sightings should be reported. The update also provided information on internet safety and road safety awareness campaigns which are being delivered in local schools in collaboration with Police Scotland; the rise in fly tipping on Ministry of Defence land and information on the Police Scotland Youth Volunteers who are looking for opportunities to support the local community.

Helensburgh Community Council advised of the current position in relation to the submission of a bid for the Waterfront; the Pier Regeneration Project; the provision of warm spaces and the petition to the Scottish Government to prioritise local participation in planning decisions.

Fun First advised that they continue to provide sessions for pre-school children and their parents with at least one session available every day in either Helensburgh, Cardross, Garelochhead or Rosneath; a grant had been received from the TSI Health and Wellbeing Fund to fund Fun First Friends sessions this year and leaders and committee members participated in First Aid for Mental Health training in November. Sarah Davies also highlighted that training is to be held in March to run outdoor sessions for parents and children.

Consideration was given to an update by Angela Anderson on behalf of Plastic Free Helensburgh. The update highlighted that they had purchased four 2 minute litter picking stations with the grant received from the Supporting Communities Fund, the

successful event with Scottish Water in November promoting their “ban the wipes” campaign. Information was also provided on the combined beach cleans with Helensburgh Community Council.

Gill Simpson from Helensburgh Community Hub provided information on the Reading Minds Book Festival which is to be held on the 22-24 March 2024 in collaboration with Jean’s Bothy and Helensburgh and Lomond Carers Centre; the Hub being chosen to be one of four Scottish programmes to be part of the exhibition in the Scottish Parliament being hosted by The Dollywood Foundation in March; reading for pleasure activities and collaborations; volunteer numbers and the need for collaboration to create a funded gardening project.

Fiona Baker on behalf of Destination Helensburgh highlighted that they have over 180 events scheduled for Helensburgh and Lomond this year and that they have been doing a lot of social media promotions to attract visitors to the locality with engagement numbers remaining very high.

The Group gave consideration to a presentation from Veronica Ferguson, Helensburgh and Lomond Living Well Network. The presentation included information on what the Living Well Network are and the work they have been doing. It was highlighted that The Living Well Network is currently distributing funding received from the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) to local charities doing work in the community that reflect the ADP priorities. Veronica highlighted that they are hosting a Living Well event in Helensburgh Leisure Centre on the 16 June to encourage people to get out of their homes and see what is available to them.

Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands (Meeting Papers - [LINK](#))

Consideration was given to an annual report from Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA), which provided information in relation to their stock in the Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands area; ongoing Regeneration and Investment programmes; the Warm Homes Fund project; the Business Energy Industrial Strategy; Whole House Retrofit Programme; the ongoing replacement of inefficient heating systems to be replaced with air source heat pump systems; ongoing improvement works at Duncholgan travelling persons site; a review of ACHA’s sheltered housing services; continuing work on property allocation and re-letting; works planned for the Exemplar Estates initiative; opportunities for communities to engage with planned Estate Walkabouts; an ongoing consultation on ACHA’s Customer Involvement Strategy; welfare rights services; adaptations for vulnerable customers; success at the Scotland Housing Awards, Scottish Energy Efficiency Awards, and Tenant Advisory Service National Excellence Awards; awards for local schools as part of ACHA’s 10 10 10 initiative and the results of feedback from customer satisfaction surveys.

The Group considered a verbal update from Transport Scotland's North West Area Manager. Information was provided in relation to upcoming works across the area, including drainage repairs at the Rest and Be Thankful; resurfacing projects in Arrochar, North of Ballochroy, West of Craigs and North of Artilligan; and the felling of diseased trees in the vicinity of Inveraray throughout March. The North West Area Manager also provided an update in relation to discussions between Transport Scotland, Bear Scotland and Argyll and Bute Council in relation to the proposed active travel and drainage project in Kinloch Road, Campbeltown. It was noted that this project was approaching a public consultation phase, and it was hoped that work would begin on site during the 2024-25 financial year. An update was also provided in relation to continuing works on the Hall Street footway and the potential need for an alternative surface for the footway to avoid algae and moss growth. It was noted that an additional area of the Hall Street footway had also been added to the programme for attention.

Leah McGuigan and Eryne Barr from InspirAlba spoke to a report and presentation in relation to the Household Resilience project's delivery of support for those affected by fuel and food poverty. The report and presentation highlighted the work of partner organisations including Kintyre Food Bank, Bute Advice, ALI Energy, Home Energy Scotland, and Kintyre Recycling. Leah and Eryne provided information in relation to the ways in which the Project could assist people to access support, including assistance with application forms and monitoring the outcomes of applications; signposting to relevant organisations and the delivery of food parcels for those who may be unable to access them. It was noted that the Project had assisted over 500 households to date, as well as 73 households supported through the School Uniform Project.

The Group gave consideration to a report which highlighted the ongoing work of Forestry and Land Scotland within the area. Information was included in relation to Land Management Plans at South Knapdale and East Loch Awe; the continuing spread of the Larch Phytosphthora Ramorum disease in the area and efforts being made to combat this; the ongoing peatland restoration programme; upcoming complex operations; engagement with Lochgilphead High School careers fair; a project to map private water supplies across the West region; the release of four beavers in Knapdale Forest in December 2023; ongoing invasive species removal operations; and works around potential impacts of a Scottish and Southern Energy substation on the forest road near Achabreac.

Kintyre Climate Action Team provided information on the work of the Project which is scheduled to conclude at the end of February 2024. Highlights included the co-ordination of local events for Scottish Climate Week; the initiation of an Atlantic Rainforest Education Project, culminating in the anticipated launch of the Kintyre Rainforest Alliance; the production of a Campbeltown 'green map'; the imminent launch of the 'Campbeltown EcoCup' and the Campbeltown Climate Action Film

Festival; assistance in obtaining funding for a local zero-waste business; assistance with running a school workshop in conjunction with Climate Action Towns; the success and ongoing development of the Kintyre Grows project; and various methods used to distribute and share ideas and information.

Oban, Lorn and the Isles (Meeting Papers - [LINK](#))

An update which provided information on the ongoing work of the Living Well Network across Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree was considered. Carol Flett advised that 3 local charities had been successful in obtaining funding through the Third Sector Interface. An event has been arranged for 14 May in Rockfield Centre, Oban with the morning session being for Living Well Network Members and the afternoon session being open to the public where they will be able to gather information from charities, organisations and people who provide support about the support that is available for them. A further day is arranged for 28th August 2024 at An Talla, Isle of Tiree.

Consideration was given to the written report submitted by Oban Access Panel, the report provided an update on the Braille Labelling Campaign, which has been discussed in Holyrood. The petition remains open to anyone who has not registered their interest and can be found at:- <http://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1997>

Joan Best highlighted that Crossroads are now supporting 79 carers with around 195 hours of respite offered per week. Crossroads have also been in discussions with key stakeholders to establish the service on Tiree with referrals expected soon. Hope Kitchen Catriona Petit advised that the Climate Hub is open and Time for Change hold a café within Hope Kitchen each month. Support work around alcohol and addictions continues, focusing on recovery and reducing stigma. Food Poverty, Cost of Living Crisis and Mental Health support will be delivered from the new shop space in George Street which should be open in March.

4.1 Further Actions

It is requested that the Management Committee note the report and the successful meetings held in January and February 2024.

5.0 Implications

Strategic Implications	Meetings of the Area Community Planning Group held in May covered various Outcomes.
Consultations	No prior circulation of this report.
Resources	No direct resource implications however consideration of the issues raised and following courses of action may have a knock on effect on finance and/or staff resource
Prevention	Contributes to the prevention agenda

Equalities	Contributes toward reducing inequalities

For More Information:

Stuart McLean, Committee Manager, stuart.mclean@argyll-bute.gov.uk

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Management Committee

Date: 10 April 2024



Governance of ABOIP 2024-2034

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide the CPP Management Committee with information on legislative requirements for community planning participation and facilitate discussion on governance arrangements for the new Argyll and Bute Outcomes Improvement Plan¹.

2.0 Recommendations

The CPP Management Committee is asked to:

- note the legislation concerning community planning partners within the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015²
- discuss the recommended governance arrangements, at 4.2, to support delivery of the new Outcomes Improvement Plan

3.0 Background

The Argyll and Bute Outcomes Improvement Plan 2024-2034 identifies Transport Infrastructure, Housing, and Community Wellbeing as the three outcomes to be prioritised by the Community Planning Partnership over the period of the plan. Appropriate governance structures will be required to ensure the agreement, monitoring and delivery of actions against each of the three outcomes.

4.0 Detail

4.1 ABOIP 2013-2023 governance and community planning legislation

Our current CPP consists of a Management Committee, a Full Partnership and 4 x Area Community Planning Groups.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act sets out who must participate in community planning and there are two elements to this:

1. those who need to participate to provide oversight and ensure the CPP is working, and
2. those who need to carry out the work to deliver outcomes.

The table appended sets out who this is within our current governance arrangement.

4.2 Recommendations for governance 2024-2034

We have 10 years' experience of delivering an Outcome Improvement Plan (2013-2023) with the governance structure outlined above. From this we have learned that it is important to have:

- Statutory partners engaged in a way that works with their organisational capacity to participate.
- Monitoring and problem solving on action plans from statutory partners.
- More than one person/ partner agency leading on actions to remove the risk of work stopping in the event that person leaves their post.
- Chairing of meetings being the responsibility of more than one person.
- Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament supported by their key worker from Live Argyll copied into all communications.
- Opportunity for chairs of Area Community Planning Groups to share with the statutory partners the local challenges with delivering on improving outcomes.

It is recommended that a new governance be put in place which will build on the strengths and learning and achieve the following:

- Enable a focus towards actions and delivery.
- Offer opportunity for all required by legislation to take part in Community Planning to do so.

The recommendation comprises of changes to the frequency of meetings and membership, and the addition of working groups.

Part of CPP Governance	Membership	Frequency and duration of meeting
Management Committee	The Chief Officer level of organisations who must facilitate community planning (as per the legislation) and ensure the CPP carries out its functions.	Twice per year, half-day hybrid meetings.
Full Partnership	Partners who must carry out community planning	Once per year, full day.
Working Groups	Appropriate community planning partners and community bodies.	Frequent meetings at timescales relevant to the delivery of actions. Ranging from fortnightly to monthly.
4 x Area Community Planning Groups	As per the Terms of Reference	4 times per year

For more information contact: rona.gold@argyll-bute.gov.uk, Communities and Partnership Manager,

Appendix 1: Table showing CPP Management Committee attendees during the period of the previous ABOIP, according to the categorisation of statutory community planning partners in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

Partners on Management Committee (2013-2023) who must facilitate community planning and ensure the CPP carries out its functions³
Argyll and Bute Council
Health Board (NHS Highland)
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Police Scotland
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Scottish Enterprise
Partners sitting on the Management Committee (2013-2023) who must carry out community planning⁴
Board of Management of regional college (UHI Argyll)
NatureScot
Skills Development Scotland
Partners not sitting on the CPP MC Management Committee (2013-2023) who must carry out community planning⁴
Historic Environment Scotland
Argyll and Bute Integration Joint Board (IJB)
Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park
Regional Strategic Body for FE & HE (UHI)
Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SportScotland
Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
HITRANS
VisitScotland
Non-Statutory Partners sitting on CPP MC⁵
Third Sector Interface
Bord Na Gaidhlig
Department for Work and Pensions
Scottish Ambulance Service
LiveArgyll
Non-Statutory Partners that have taken part in delivering community planning during 2013-2023⁵
ACHA
Caledonian MacBrayne
CMAL
Crofting Commission
Dunbritton Housing Association
Forestry and Land Scotland
Fyne Homes
Ministry of Defence
Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks
Scottish Water
West Highland Housing Association

References

¹ [Argyll and Bute Outcomes Improvement Plan 2024-2034](#)

² [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)

³ **Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, Part 2, Section 13: Governance**

“(1) For the area of each local authority, each person mentioned in subsection (2) must—

(a) **facilitate community planning,**

(b) **take reasonable steps to ensure that the community planning partnership carries out its functions under this Part efficiently and effectively.**

(2) The persons are—

(a) the local authority,

(b) the Health Board constituted under section 2(1)(a) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 whose area includes, or is the same as, the area of the local authority,

(c) Highlands and Islands Enterprise where the area within which, or in relation to which, it exercises functions in accordance with section 21(1) of the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990 includes the whole or part of the area of the local authority,

(d) the chief constable of the Police Service of Scotland,

(e) the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service,

(f) Scottish Enterprise”

⁴ **Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, Part 2, Section 4: Community Planning**

“(1) **Each local authority and the persons listed in schedule 1 must carry out planning for the area of the local authority** for the purpose mentioned in subsection (2) (“community planning”).

(2) The purpose is improvement in the achievement of outcomes resulting from, or contributed to by, the provision of services delivered by or on behalf of the local authority or the persons listed in schedule 1.”

Schedule 1

“The board of management of a regional college designated by order under section 7A of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 which is situated in the area of the local authority

The chief constable of the Police Service of Scotland

The Health Board constituted under section 2(1)(a) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 whose area includes, or is the same as, the area of the local authority

Highlands and Islands Enterprise where the area within which, or in relation to which, it exercises functions in accordance with section 21(1) of the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990 includes the whole or part of the area of the local authority

Historic Environment Scotland

Any integration joint board established by virtue of section 9 of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 to which functions of the local authority and the Health Board are delegated

A National Park authority, established by virtue of a designation order under section 6 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, for a Park whose area includes the whole or part of the area of the local authority

A regional strategic body specified in schedule 2A to the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 which is situated in the area of the local authority

Scottish Enterprise

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Scottish Natural Heritage

The Scottish Sports Council

South of Scotland Enterprise where all or part of the area of the local authority is within the South of Scotland as defined by section 21 of the South of Scotland Enterprise Act 2019

The Skills Development Scotland Co. Limited

A regional Transport Partnership established by virtue of section 1(1)(b) of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 whose region includes, or is the same as, the area of the local authority

VisitScotland”

⁵ Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, Part 2, Section 4: Community Planning

(3) In carrying out community planning, the local authority and the persons listed in schedule 1 must—

(a) participate with each other, and

(b) participate with any community body (as mentioned in paragraph (c) of subsection (6)) in such a way as to enable that body to participate in community planning to the extent mentioned in that paragraph.

(4) Outcomes of the type mentioned in subsection (2) (“local outcomes”) must be consistent with the national outcomes determined under section 1(1) or revised under section 2(5)(c).

(5) In carrying out the functions conferred on them by this Part in relation to the area of a local authority—

(a) the local authority for the area and the persons listed in schedule 1 are collectively referred to in this Part as a “community planning partnership”, and

(b) the authority and each such person is referred to in this Part as a “community planning partner”.

(6) Each community planning partnership must—

(a) consider which community bodies are likely to be able to contribute to community planning having regard in particular to which of those bodies represent the interests of persons who experience inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage,

(b) make all reasonable efforts to secure the participation of those community bodies in community planning, and

(c) to the extent (if any) that those community bodies wish to participate in community planning, take such steps as are reasonable to enable the community bodies to participate in community planning to that extent.

(7) The Scottish Ministers may by regulations modify schedule 1 so as to—

(a) add a person or a description of person,

(b) remove an entry listed in it,

(c) amend an entry listed in it.

(8) Regulations under subsection (7) may provide that a person or a description of person listed in schedule 1 is to participate in community planning for a specific purpose.

(9) In this section, “community bodies”, in relation to a community planning partnership, means bodies, whether or not formally constituted, established for purposes which consist of or include that of promoting or improving the interests of any communities (however described) resident or otherwise present in the area of the local authority for which the community planning partnership is carrying out community planning.”

Date: 3 April 2024



Addressing the Climate Emergency in Argyll and Bute: Argyll and Bute Climate Action

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the CPP Argyll And Bute Climate Action project: developing a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for Argyll and Bute, and associated work including the Climate Action Network Hub

2.0 Recommendations

The CPP Management Committee are asked to:

- Note the approach and status of the project outlined in the report.

3.0 Background

The CPP sub-group working on climate change is known as the Climate Change Working Group. It took a fresh look at its remit and potential outputs, which have ultimately centred on producing a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for Argyll and Bute.

The plan is to be produced by employing a Climate Change Project Manager to lead on the process. Argyll & the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust (ACT) are the employing body and the manager started in post on 30 October 2023.

This update sets out the current position.

4.0 Detail

4.1 Funding update

The Climate Change Working Group pulled together a funding package to support the post of the Climate Change Project Manager, meaning that the post is fully funded for the 2 year duration, with thanks to all those supporting the project:

£80,000	Argyll and Bute Council
£15,000	NatureScot
£20,000	Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface (TSI)

£10,000 NHS Highland - Argyll & Bute Health and Social Care Partnership
Total = £125,000

4.2 Progress

Main activity has been:

- One to one meetings with Steering Group, CWG members and other key personnel to identify priorities
- Meetings with core/potential national partners, notably Sustainable Scotland Network and Adaptation Scotland including discussion of methodology suitable for specific needs of Argyll
- Literature review to inform methodology and best practice in addition to known progress and gaps
- Initial outline strategy drafted

An initial draft Strategy was presented to the CWG meeting of 20 March. The structure was informed by best and most appropriate exemplars from across Scotland, and by feedback from partner meetings including the emphasis placed on brevity and avoidance of duplication. Points discussed included

- Outcomes from key Scottish and UK climate and associated strategies have been mapped and aligned with the three CPP Transport, Housing and Community Wellbeing outcomes.
- Volunteers from CWG to work with the project manager to refine the suggested vision statement following CWG comments, thereafter to submit to the CPP Management Committee for approval.
- CWG have also been asked to provide any further comments on the draft and appendices to the manager
- The group supported the principle of early production of a strategy paper describing strategic approach, and then emphasis on development of the action plan, rather than producing both towards the end of the funded period
- Use existing reporting mechanisms, principally Public Body Climate Duty reporting requirements, where possible rather than create new requirements
- Use existing data where possible and work within limitations of trying to fill data gaps where there are no mandated requirements
- Support partners to identify or create opportunities to meet existing duties: not a mandate to create new duties
- Recognise and work within the limits of the areas where CPP partners have control and where they can seek to influence. Notably, private sector emissions may be outwith the scope of influence for the CPP, but it remains important that businesses can be supported to reduce emissions.
- The proposed national adaptation strategy places high expectations on the role of communities as part of an overall resilience response.

- Engagement has been predominantly with institutions and key contacts but working closely with the grassroots engagement programme of the Climate Action Network Hub work funded by Scottish Government which has greatly extended reach. The strategy project is also adding value to the Hub work.
- The project is collaborating with the CPP workstream developing Area Plans (working name)

Immediate next steps are:

- Ongoing engagement – noting the importance of engaging with young people and how branding and identity may support this
- Ongoing engagement in conjunction with Climate Hubs
- Gap analysis, risk and opportunity assessment methodologies with further guidance from key CPP contacts
- Followed by risk and opportunity assessment workshops potentially grouped by CPP Outcomes

4.3 ABCAN (Argyll & Bute Climate Action Network) Hub

The Climate Change Strategy project is working closely with the ABCAN (Argyll & Bute Climate Action Network) Hub, which sits within the wider suite of Act Now climate projects in which ACT is engaged.

The Hub has Scottish Government funding, and is overseen by a collaboration between ACT, Argyll & Bute Third Sector Interface and Time for Change Argyll & Bute, with the goals of

- building awareness of the climate and nature emergency across all communities
- Increasing community resilience and knowledge of how to respond to climate change
- stimulating community level climate action
- embedding cooperation and learning
- encouraging community groups to collaborate at a regional level and to work in partnership with other key local stakeholders, and allowing an approach to be developed within each region that reflects local circumstances and priorities

The ABCAN hub model is up and running with a delivery team, made up from community organisations, freelancers and ACT employees delivering community climate engagement in all 4 administrative areas

ABCAN has created an Argyll & Bute Specific Carbon Literacy Training Course. This free certified training is available to all local residents and incorporates local relevant examples to build engagement. This training package can also be taken in part to create less formal, 'climate conversations' within communities

ABCAN ran a seed funding programme to March 2023, disbursing c£48k of grants across 39 local groups looking to act on climate change.

To March ABCAN delivered 3 regional Climate Forums, focussing on Energy, Housing, and Food, to reflect Argyll & Bute priorities and capture community voices which will help to inform the wider strategy for Climate Change action in Argyll & Bute.

The ABCAN Website is live at www.abcn.scot and is the platform to access a membership application/portal, offer training opportunities and climate action support, and be the site of a community led Green Map, further supported by the new ABCAN online network for individuals and groups

4.3 Governance

The project manager is line managed by ACT and guided and supported by the project Steering Group, a sub-set of the CPP Climate Change Working Group chaired by Rona Gold.

The CPP Climate Change Working Group will moderate its activity while this project is ongoing, and proposed new Terms of Reference have been circulated round the group for comment. These reflect a change of emphasis to sharing expertise and knowledge to support the development and delivery of the Argyll and Bute Climate Action Strategy and Action Plan.

Andy Macpherson, Climate Change Project Manager

For more information, please contact:

Andy Macpherson

andy@act-now.org.uk

Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership Climate Change Working Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Meeting Purpose/Aims and Objectives
<p>The group is a working group of Argyll and Bute's Community Planning Partnership (CPP). The purpose of this group is to bring together statutory community planning partners with representatives of community bodies to improve the achievement of outcomes relating to the impacts of climate change, consistent with the Argyll and Bute Outcomes Improvement Plan (ABOIP).</p> <p>AIM To improve the achievement of outcomes for Argyll and Bute communities relating to the impacts of climate change by supporting the production of an Argyll and Bute Climate Action Strategy and Action Plan for the CPP. The Plan will present a council area wide climate risk assessment and to develop an integrated set of adaptation, mitigation and engagement actions, and promote a just and equitable transition to a net zero economy.</p> <p>OBJECTIVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work effectively and productively in partnership together and with other appropriate organisations. • Share expertise and knowledge to support the development and delivery of the Argyll and Bute Climate Action Strategy and Action Plan • Share information and updates on relevant climate action activity to support the development and delivery of the Argyll and Bute Climate Action Strategy and Action Plan • Support the Project Manager to engage effectively in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Map existing activity on climate emergency in Argyll and Bute. ➢ Map relevant stakeholders. ➢ Gather views and activity to inform the content of the action plan. ➢ Motivate everyone to get involved in climate emergency activity.

Reporting and Accountability
<p>This group is a sub-group of the CPP Management Committee. Reporting will be tabled at the Management Committee with frequency to be agreed with the Chair and the Communities and Partnership Manager.</p> <p>Members attending have a responsibility to report to their own organisations or the communities they represent.</p>

Membership	
Name	Designation
<p>Membership will represent: (a) relevant statutory and non-statutory organisations participating in the Community Planning Partnership; and</p>	

(b) relevant community bodies, in particular those representing the interests of persons who experience inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.	
Rona Gold	Communities & Partnership Manager, Argyll and Bute Council (Chair)
Angela Anderson	H&L ACPG/Plastic Free Helensburgh/Time for Change
Ian Brodie	MAKI ACPG/East Kintyre Community Council
Laura Corbe	OLI ACPG/Oban Community Council
Sarah Davies	Helensburgh Community Council/Plastic Free Helensburgh/Fun First/Time for Change
	Community Planning Partnership Officer - Argyll and Bute, Police Scotland
Leigh Fraser	Senior Policy Officer, Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Lucinda Gray	Head of Projects & Partnerships, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
David Hagerty	Community Development Officer (H&L), Argyll and Bute Council
Jamie Joyce	Project Officer, Argyll Coast and Countryside Trust
Stephen Kelly	Area Station Commander and Energy Champion, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Heather McAdam	Health Improvement Senior, NHS Highland
Ross McLaughlin	Head of Commercial Services, Argyll and Bute Council
Andy Macpherson	Climate Change Project Manager, Argyll Coast & Countryside Trust (ACT)
Jane Millar	Development Manager, Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust
Rachel Pate	Agricultural Officer, Scottish Government
Stan Phillips	Operations Manager, NatureScot
William Quinn	Community Planning Partnership Officer, Argyll and Bute, Police Scotland
Hannah Robinson	Sustainable Development Adviser, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park
Julie Young	Development Manager, Argyll Coast & Countryside Trust (ACT)
Tom Warren	Impact Manager (Sustainability), Built Environment-Smarter Transition (BE-ST)/Dunoon Area Alliance
Sara MacLean	Operations Manager, Argyll Coast & Countryside Trust (ACT)
Stephen Frew	Scottish Enterprise
Tracey Wightwick	Climate Change Officer, Argyll & Bute Council
Agenda	
The agenda is set by the Chair and members can ask for items to be added by emailing the chair.	

Administrative Arrangements

Secretariat is provided by a staff member within the Community Planning Partnership.

Chair

Chairs must represent a statutory partner organisation participating in the CPP.

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Meeting schedule

Meetings will take place on a six-monthly basis via MS Teams.

This terms of reference were adopted on _____
Review will take place annually.

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Digital Update CPP Management Meeting

Fixed Broadband R100 Update

The current programme being rolled out by the Scottish Government is the Reaching 100% better known as the R100 programme this is a £600M programme to extend Superfast Broadband (SFB) access to 100% of Scottish premises.

Currently there are over 6000 premises in Argyll and Bute in scope of this programme which will provide a number of remote premises access to a Superfast connection. Although this is Superfast Programme every premise in scope will be given access to a Full Fibre Ultrafast connection. However, on the negative side not every premise without descent access is currently going to be served. To counteract this both the UK and Scottish Governments along with OpenReach are aware of the complexities of such a huge infrastructure project. Both UK (project Gigabit) and Scottish Governments (SBVS) are running voucher scheme to provide these premises with assistance out with any government or commercial schemes. OpenReach also have there Fibre Community Partnership intervention that supports communities out with these programmes to access these vouchers as they are supplier led.

There has been some significant delays in the build of R100 across our area as OpenReach engage with the Councils Roads Department however measure are in place to mitigate these delays with an accelerated build across the whole area. We will update the partners on a regular basis outlining where build will be happening to alert individual communities to expect significant disruption particularly with traffic movements.

Currently

95.1% of Argyll and Bute premises are connected to the fibre network

87.6% can access speeds >30Mbps

0.8% are between 24 and 30 Mbps

2.2% are between 15 and 24 Mbps

1.6% are between 10 and 15Mbps

4.8% are between 2 and 10Mbps

3.0% are below 2Mbps

Full Fibre/Ultra-Fast Broadband (>100 Mbps) availability is currently at 15.1%

Shared Rural Network (SRN) and Scottish Government 4G infill programme (S4GI)

As we all know Argyll and Bute along with other rural areas have been underserved when it comes to mobile coverage from the 4 Mobile Network Operators Vodafone, O2 (now Virgin Media O2 VMO2), EE and Three. EE were the first operator to aggressively build in rural areas due to them being awarded the Emergency Service Network (ESN) as such EE currently have 75% geographic coverage across Argyll and Bute.

The S4GI and was a Scottish Government Intervention to provide infrastructure in areas that were not commercially viable. Argyll and Bute have had 7 new multi operator suitable mast built in Southend, Glenbarr, Crinan, Jura x 2 and Mull x 2.

Similarly, the SRN this is a £1B programme funded by UK Government and the 4MNO's in a joint venture and is in 2 parts, Partial Not Spot (PNS) sites industry funded £500M+ and Total Not Spot (TNS) sites Government funded £500M.

The challenge to this program is that virtually all of these sites sit in remote rural areas and very often designated planning area which comes with added levels of scrutiny by our statutory consultees and can take a considerable amount of time to get through the planning process. As with fixed broadband infrastructure build there is potential for significant disruption in the short term due to the civils work on the road network that is required. In most cases must require a power connection and a fibre connection to provide the backhaul to the network.

Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) Switch off

The main purpose of this update is to make the partners aware of the upcoming switch off of the PSTN. Reportedly this will be completed by the end of 2025 and has caused significant concern among numerous groups. It is wrongly perceived that this is Openreach turning off copper which people that don't currently have full fibre provision rely on for broadband and telephone connections. The copper network is not getting switched off it is the old analogue switching gear in telephone exchanges that is getting made redundant.

Agreed that currently in the event of a power cut homes that still have a old analogue phone can plug it straight into the phone socket in the wall and still make/receive calls as power comes from the exchange will no longer be available but alternative solutions are available and more will be available when the time comes. To allay people fears it will be no more than plugging your existing handset from the wall socket into the back of your broadband router. 99% of phone handsets are compatible with a digital phone service.

I request partners to help spread the word

The UK's home phone (landline) service is getting an upgrade. The transition has already started and will continue over the next few years. Soon, most landline calls will be made over a broadband line. The switchover should be straightforward. Your phone number will remain the same, and most handsets work fine with the new system. However, there are some steps you need to take to make sure your landline services continue to work. Your phone company will inform you ahead of the migration, but preparing now can make the transition smoother for you.

Nothing Changes for you if

- You already have Digital Voice or Internet calls service from your provider.
- You are a mobile-only household.

If your landline is migrating

- Check if other devices are connected to your landline (e.g. telecare, burglar alarms, etc.).
- Ask the device manufacturers if those connected devices are digital-ready.
- Inform your phone company about your devices.
- Let your phone company know if you are a vulnerable customer

What you need to do

If you already have broadband, the switchover could be as simple as unplugging your phone line from the wall-mounted socket and plugging it into the back of your broadband router. If you don't have access to broadband you don't need to worry. Phone companies are working on solutions to keep all customers connected and will be in touch. Some households may have other devices connected to the phone line (burglar alarms, telecare devices, fax machines, etc.). If you use such connected devices, check with the equipment providers whether your kit needs upgrading. And, let your phone company know.

Beware of Scams

Criminals may use the switchover as an opportunity to scam others. If someone contacts you, follow this advice:

1. STOP – Take a moment to stop and think before sharing personal information!
2. CHALLENGE – Never feel rushed or pressured into making a decision. If you're suspicious, hang up and call the official company number.
3. PROTECT – If you think you've been a victim of a scam report it to your communications provider and to Action Fraud by calling 0300 123 2040.

Power Outages

In the event of a power outage, digital landlines won't function until power is restored. We strongly recommend you have a mobile phone available for emergencies. Device providers and phone companies have different support on offer for those who need it.

Currently there are 2 solutions available

- Battery Back-up Units (BBU's): most suitable for customers that do not have mobile signal. These will be offered to vulnerable customers for free.
- Hybrid Phones with built batteries, which switch to mobile network connections when necessary: most suitable for customers with mobile signal. These will be offered to vulnerable customers for free.

Vulnerable Customers

Vulnerable customers, like telecare users, should inform their phone company about their needs and check if their equipment is "digital-ready." Telcos are working with local authorities and telecare providers to assist vulnerable customers. Encourage those relying on landlines to contact their phone company and social care provider

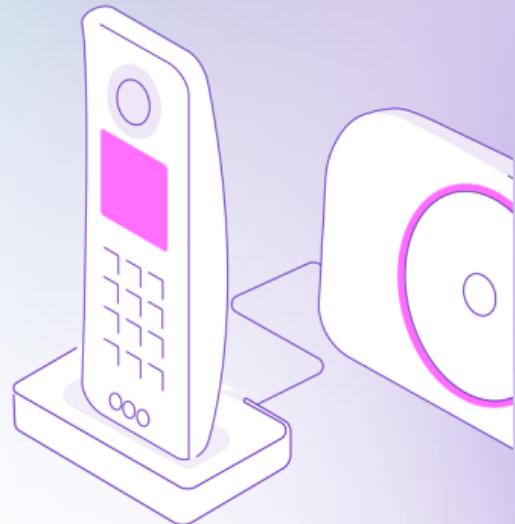
There have been 4 groups categorised as vulnerable these are

- Visual Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
- Registered Disabled
- Telecare user

It is crucial that your telephone provider are aware that an individual sits with-in one of these groups so that measures can be put in place as to not migrate their line at the moment and that they are aware that they are eligible for free power outage resilience.

A guide to Digital Voice

Digital Voice is BT's new home phone service, powered by your broadband connection



For most customers, the switch to Digital Voice will be as simple as connecting your home phone handset to a router rather than the phone socket on the wall.

BT is inviting customers to switch to its digital home phone service on a region-by-region basis.



Over 99% of phone handsets are compatible with our digital home phone service. And if yours isn't compatible, we have a range of handsets that you can add to your order.

FREE

For most BT customers, it is a simple and completely free transition to Digital Voice with no home installation work required. And you can keep your current phone number.



Digital Voice prevents the majority of scam calls, provides clearer call quality and allows users to easily divert calls to their mobile if they're out of the house.



Customers will be contacted four weeks before making the switch, to help ensure they're ready to make the move.

What about customers with additional needs?

Initially, we won't be proactively switching over customers (where this information is available):

- with a healthcare pendant
- who only use landlines
- with no mobile signal
- who have disclosed any additional needs

BT will take extra time and will provide additional support to customers who are over 70 and are ready to make the switch. If customers want to make the switch to Digital Voice, they can contact BT at any time to do so.

What if there's a power cut?

We understand that for many, particularly those with additional needs, the landline is a lifeline. We want to be sure everyone remains connected. We've been working to make battery back-up units available to those that need them. Customers with additional needs such as health pendants or without mobile signal, can take advantage of free additional support, on request. We're also working closely with the power companies to establish processes which help them to restore power as quickly as possible.



For more information, visit www.bt.com/digital-voice

The charter of commitments for customers with Telecare

Communications Providers must:

1. Not undertake any non-voluntary migrations, until they have **full confidence they are taking all possible steps to protect vulnerable people** through the migration process.
2. Not migrate Telecare users without CP's, the customer, or the telecare company **confirming they have a compatible and functioning telecare** solution in place.
3. Work to provide battery backup solutions **that go beyond the Ofcom minimum of 1 hour of continued** access to emergency services in the event of a power outage.
4. Collectively work with Ofcom and Government to create a **shared definition of 'vulnerable'** customer groups that require greater support, specific to the digital landline migration.
5. Conduct checks on customers who've already been migrated to **ensure they don't have telecare devices we were unaware of**, and if they do, ensure suitable support is provided.

Scottish National Adaptation Plan (SNAP3)

Following input via two LA Forums workshops in 2023, the *draft Scottish National Adaptation Programme 2024-29* (SNAP3) is now published for [consultation](#). Public bodies and local authorities have a statutory duty to help deliver this Plan and SG officials will present an overview to the COSLA Economy & Environment Board on 1 March with a focus on regional collaboration. A follow-on session is being planned for March/April via the SSN and SLAED networks with a focus on climate resilient economic development.

Contact: Iain.Thom@gov.scot

[Climate change - draft Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3: consultation - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#)

Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill

The consultation for a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill closed on 14 February. The consultation received a large response and processing of the comments has now started. Further updates will be provided in due course.

<https://consult.gov.scot/national-performance-framework-unit/wellbeing-and-sustainable-development-scotland>

National Performance Framework

The current [National Outcomes](#) were published in June 2018, following consultation across the Scottish Government, the wider public sector and local authorities and with the public, trade unions, business organisations and civic and voluntary sector organisations.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires us to review the National Outcomes every five years. A review is ongoing, led by the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework Unit, to ensure the National Outcomes continue to reflect the kind of Scotland we all want to live in. Revised National Outcomes will be taken to the Scottish Government Cabinet in March 2024. The Scottish Parliament will then take a few months to scrutinise both the revised NPF and the Review process. A revised NPF will be published in autumn 2024.

We are also working to improve implementation of the NPF across Scotland. We are considering recommendations made by the Finance and Public Administration Committee's NPF inquiry report, 'Ambitions into Action.' In response to the report, the Scottish Government has committed to producing an implementation plan for the revised NPF in 2024, to support further progress towards achieving the National Outcomes.

We launched a new NPF website on 6 February. The homepage address hasn't changed but you might need to update your favourites or bookmarks, as we have

moved a few things around. We have prioritised improving the accessibility and usability of the site, with additional functionality currently in development. Key content, including National Indicator data, resources and case studies, should be easier to find.

If you have any feedback or ideas for future improvements, get in touch or use the feedback forms across the site. We will provide updates on further website developments, progress of the review and the implementation plan here. For more frequent updates [subscribe to the monthly NPF](#) newsletter or contact the [National Performance Framework Unit](#) directly.

Management Committee

Date: 10 April 2024



Scottish Government – Addressing Depopulation Action Plan

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the CPP Management Committee with an overview of the Scottish Government Addressing Depopulation Action Plan, published on 16th February 2024.

2.0 Recommendations

The CPP Management Committee is asked to:

- note the overview of the purpose and key points from the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan
- note the content of section 5.5 of the report on Local Delivery relating specifically to Community Planning Partnerships
- consider the linkages between the new Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities and the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan

3.0 Background

The Addressing Depopulation Action Plan sets out the Scottish Government's strategic approach to address population attraction and retention challenges for those communities facing a decline in population.

4.0 Detail

4.1 Overview of the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan

The Addressing Depopulation Action Plan represents the first phase in establishing and delivering a programme to address depopulation strategically with a “local by default, national by agreement” emphasis. The plan identifies the myriad factors contributing to community level depopulation, highlights the role to be played now and in the future by regional and local stakeholders, and sets out the role the

Scottish Government will play through policy in supporting objectives at a community level.

4.2 The role of Community Planning Partnerships

The Addressing Depopulation Action Plan sets out the existing national policy context, the ongoing research and a set of actions primarily for the Scottish Government, for each sub-theme within the five policy areas.

The Action Plan recognises the role of community planning in supporting community stability through partnership working to improve the design and delivery of local services with a focus on reducing inequalities.

The plan also references the Verity House Agreement, highlighting the critical nature of CPPs in aligning local resources and delivering shared priorities, together with the ambassadorial role played by the Scottish Government Place Director across governmental portfolios.

The following Scottish Government actions are listed under the Community Planning Partnership heading:

- We will engage further with COSLA, the CPIB, the Community Planning Network to agree collective next steps around community planning.
- We will support local government and community planning, including through Scottish Government Place Directors, aligned to the ambitions set out in the Verity House Agreement, including supporting areas which are facing issues relating to population.

4.3 Linkages to the new Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities

The Addressing Depopulation Action Plan groups the key enabling national policy areas into five themes, namely:

1. Infrastructure (including Housing, Transport, Digital Connectivity)
2. Services (including Education, Childcare, Health & Social Care)
3. Economy (including Migration, Talent Attraction, Skills)
4. Culture (including Gaelic, Community Wealth Building, Workforce Dispersal)
5. Land and Marine (including Methods of Land Ownership, Crofting, Blue Economy, Just Transition)

The new Argyll and Bute Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities of Transport Infrastructure and Housing align well with the Infrastructure theme while aspects of the Community Wellbeing priority overlap the other four themes.

5.0 Implications

Strategic Implications	Scottish Government support for the Argyll and Bute CPP in addressing depopulation will be aligned to the Verity House Agreement
Consultations, Previous considerations	
Resources	
Prevention	
Equalities	
Climate Change	

For more information, contact:

John McLuckie

Partnerships Lead (Community Planning)

john.mcluckie@argyll-bute.gov.uk

References

Scottish Government - Supporting and enabling sustainable communities: action plan to address depopulation

[Supporting and enabling sustainable communities: action plan to address depopulation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2018/06/Supporting_and_enabling_sustainable_communities_action_plan_to_address_depopulation_-_gov.scot)

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 ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

 Community Planning Partnership
 Management Committee

[HSCP]

10th of April 2024

Tackling Child Poverty 2023 - 2024

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report aims to provide a brief summary of some of the work undertaken by the Council, Health Board and other organisations tackling child poverty across Argyll and Bute.

Key groups involved in coordinating work relating to tackling child poverty continue to be the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Group and the Financial Advice and Inclusion Group. Until recently the lead on tackling child poverty was Fiona Davies but going forward this role will be taken by Evan Beswick.

The Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2022 – 2023 was published at the end of 2023 and can be found on the Council's Challenge Poverty Website:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/money-advice/challenge-poverty>

Most recent child poverty figures were released on 5th of June 2023, the End Child Poverty Coalition published the latest local child poverty figures. Their research, covering the period 2021–2022, provides the best available estimates of child poverty at the local authority level (below 60% of the median income after housing costs).

Argyll and Bute children in poverty (after housing costs)

Date	Percentage of Children in Poverty	Percentage Point Change
2014 - 2015	20.7%	
2020 - 2021	18.9%	-1.8%
2021 - 2022	21.7%	+2.8%

It should be noted that this year's national figures will be keenly awaited because The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 set four targets relating to ending child poverty, which the Scottish Government committed to trying to achieve by 2023 and 2030; these are all measured after housing costs are deducted. The targets for 2023 - 2024 are:

- Less than 18% of children are in relative poverty;
- Less than 14% of children are in absolute poverty;
- Less than 8% of children are in combined low income and material deprivation;
- Less than 8% of children are in persistent poverty.

Every year each local authorities Child Poverty Action Plan Report is reviewed by someone from a national assessment team that includes people from the Improvement Service, the Poverty Alliance and SPIRU. Argyll and Bute's last report was reviewed by Becky Hothersall from the Poverty Alliance who said that the report was very good and comprehensive. Three areas for possible improvement were highlighted and these will be addressed in the next report (2023 - 2034) to be written in 2024. These were:

1. Recognizing the unaffordability and lack of availability of public transport in rural areas, more strategic focus on transport as a key enabler of poverty in next year's plan – including reflecting wider work that is happening in the region and linking this to child poverty.
2. Establish greater clarity on the overarching, strategic approach to tackling child poverty in A&B – including stronger linkages between identified strategies and objectives with data; policymaking; and lived experience engagement.
3. Expand pre-existing work on lived experience to a wider range of stakeholders, with a particular focus on parents.

Some key Areas Relating to Tackling Child Poverty 2023 – 2024.

1. **Housing** - Argyll and Bute Council was the first local authority in Scotland to declare a Housing Emergency in June 2023. A Housing Emergency Summit was held in November 2023, bringing together 90 partners from public, private, third and community sectors who pledged their support to take action to address the housing emergency.

Partnership delivery planning prioritised the implementation of 39 housing emergency actions aimed at tackling housing shortage. The Housing Summit report can be seen here.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/Argyll%20Bute%20Housing%20Emergency%20Summit%20Outcomes%20Report%202024.pdf>

A final version of the Argyll & Bute Housing Emergency Action will be launched across Housing Summit partners by spring 2024.

Number of households with children and the number of children waiting for a social rented property.

HOME Argyll waiting list	No of households with children under 16	Total No of children
General list	573	1043
Homeless list	60	125
Transfer list	341	701
TOTAL	974	1869

Source: Abrisas (Argyll and Bute's Joint Housing Register) March 2023

2. **Fuel Poverty** - Argyll and Bute Council recognises the impact of fuel poverty on children and families. It sends this message to Government and works with third sector partners like Allenergy to mitigate the impacts.

Argyll and Bute– cost of living crisis case for support; our situational brief.

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s189147/Corporate%20cost%20of%20living_4.pdf

It also provides dedicated Council webpages to give people advice on how and where to get help.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/money-advice/heat-your-home-managing-rising-costs>

3. **Flexible Food and Fuel Fund** - This fund combines grants with advice services. If granted, monies are given for food and fuel; if service users consent to accept advice services input, from the Bute Advice Centre and Allenergy, they can be considered for a further grant. From 14 January 2021 to 31 December 22 the project, has supported 1,627 households who are suffering from food and fuel insecurities in Argyll and Bute, with a combined client gain of £2,353,670. Bute Advice Centre and Allenergy continue to work hard in locating those who could benefit from the funding and look forward to rolling out the project in the next two financial years.
4. **Data Analysis** – work is being carried out try and improve local child poverty data and, importantly, to better identify families requiring advice and support and who may not be claiming their full entitlement of benefits. This work is being led by David Murdoch and Fergus Walker and focuses on the use of a Power BI model and looks at using a number of different data sets including Council Tax Reduction, Free School Meals Grants and School Clothing Grants. It is hoped we will be able to identify need at a postcode and School catchment level.

Argyll and Bute achieved a grant of £16,000 from the Child Poverty Action Fund to purchase CACI (Disposable Income figures) data sets to add to the model. Argyll and Bute is also one of three local authorities working with SAVVI (Scalable Approach to Vulnerability via Interoperability), via the Improvement Service. This work is

looking at identifying legal gateways that will allow us to use the identified data for the purpose required, without breaching GDPR regulations. For example, the use of the Digital Economy Act 2017 as the legal gateway for Council Tax Reduction and Council Tax Arrears, is being considered.

5. **Employability Measures** – The Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership believes that supporting people to gain employability skills and good employment opportunities helps to increase household incomes and reduce poverty. The importance of this key area of work is also recognised by the Scottish Government and they are funding Employability Child Poverty coordinator roles situated within each of the 32 Local Authorities. This role will provide an additional resource to support the delivery of commitments set out in Best Start Bright Futures (Scottish Govt. Tackling child poverty delivery plan) by ensuring alignment between Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) and wrap-around services that support parents' transition or progression within work, such as childcare and transport. Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership is in the process of recruiting a Coordinator to work alongside employability partners and child poverty leads.

The Partnership employs a range of measures to increase employment and hence reduce poverty. These include: No One Left Behind and the Parental Employability Scheme.

6. **Transport Poverty** – This is a major concern in Argyll and Bute where many people live in remote, rural and island areas. The consultation work for the new ABOIP identified transport infrastructure as the top priority for the majority of people asked. Transport poverty can restrict employment and education, divide families and communities and increase health concerns. More requires to be done in this area.
7. **Advice Services** – Effective advice services are key to tackling child poverty and ensuring that people have the information they require to claim their full benefit entitlement, manage debt etc. Figures on client gain demonstrate how successful this area of activity is in Argyll and Bute. Advice Services across Argyll and Bute have managed to make a considerable difference in the lives of people who are struggling. The table below shows the client gain from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 for the citizens of Argyll and Bute as £10,849,000.
8. **Islands Strategic Group** – Argyll and Bute is part of this group organised by the Scottish Government. It met in October 2023 to look at issues relating to child poverty; these included: the cost of living crisis, transport, migration issues and labour shortages, island fuel poverty and the lack of child care. Argyll and Bute is part of the work taking place to develop a National Islands Plan.
9. **Infant Food Insecurity – Infant food insecurity has been identified as an issue of concern in Scotland.** The SLWG on Infant Food Insecurity produced a leaflet to advice people with new babies or expecting a baby, on where to get help if they were experiencing infant food pressures. 1,000 copies of this have been printed and sent

out to: Health Visitors, Midwives, School Nurses, Allenergy, Bute Advice Centre and the Council's Welfare Rights Team, Social Workers. Allenergy and Bute Advice have conducted training with Health Visitors etc. in the use of the new leaflets and advising service users. A similar leaflet has been created for the use of School Family Liaison Officers and training provided. We are now looking at possible pathways to provide emergency cash or voucher options to purchase baby formula.

10. **Training** – Argyll and Bute is continuing its efforts to train staff to be poverty aware and able to support people. An example is the continued roll out of Money Counts Training to staff across Argyll and Bute. This is a 45 minute awareness session, for anyone who may feel less confident and experienced about discussing money worries, but may be in a position to have a brief conversation with individuals and signpost on. This session is targeted at anyone from health, education and social care staff; 3rd sector workers and volunteers; warm place volunteers and anyone who may be able to start a brief conversation about money worries.

The session aims to:

- Increase understanding of poverty and its impact;
- Increase confidence to ask about money worries;
- Increase knowledge of support services for money matters.

Another example would be the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss) are delivering a webinar on island child poverty on the 21st of March for rural Social Workers and others, speakers will be Colin Gilmour (Health Improvement Head, Western Isles) and Councillor Angus McCormack (Western Isles) and Mandy Sheridan for AB. IRISS are also holding an online conference in May for Social Workers, one of the topics here will be Rural Child Poverty.

11. **Engagement** – Since developing our first Child Poverty Action Report in 2019 engagement has been done in a variety of ways; through engagement with School Councils, Youth Voice and other groups; through engagement and information sharing via networks like Living Well; through media campaigns throughout the year and particularly during Challenge Poverty Week and through the production of aids like the graphic version of the plan (Plan on a Page).

UNCRC Implementation work has resulted in a £53,000 grant from the UNCRC Innovations fund to be spent in 2024 with conducting face to face engagement events for children and young people across Argyll and Bute about their rights. This engagement work can include engagement on child poverty.

Lack of a budget to develop group consultation with lived experience people has always been a difficulty in local engagement on child poverty. However this year the Poverty Alliance have funds to develop a project called "Taking Action on Rural Poverty" which will work with a recruited lived experience groups in Aberdeenshire and Argyll and Bute to:

- Support people with direct experience of poverty and trauma to collaborate with community and voluntary organisations, the private sector and public bodies to address the poverty premium.
- Strengthen connections and collaboration between rural organisations and support them to network and undertake anti-poverty advocacy work.
- We learn about change in taking a participatory approach to tackling the rural poverty premium.

Our local Child Poverty Action Group will be working with the Poverty Alliance in this endeavour and hope to be able to build on this work in coming years.

12. Warm Spaces - The Third Sector Interface have been key in setting up warm spaces and supporting their member organisations. Their focus is on supporting the health of community groups and their capacity to respond to the cost of living crisis. The goal is to create a comprehensive directory that encompasses public, private, health, and voluntary sectors. This directory will serve as a guide for those seeking warmth and companionship during the colder months

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

**[Community Planning Partnership
Management Committee]**

[HSCP]

[10th of April 2024]

[Tackling Child Poverty 2023 - 2024]

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This report aims to provide a brief summary of some of the work undertaken by the Council, Health Board and other organisations tackling child poverty across Argyll and Bute.

Key groups involved in coordinating work relating to tackling child poverty continue to be the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Group and the Financial Advice and Inclusion Group. Until recently the lead on tackling child poverty was Fiona Davies but going forward this role will be taken by Evan Beswick.

Work that helps to tackle child poverty goes on in a wide variety of setting and agencies across Argyll and Bute; the Scottish Government plan “Best Start Bright Futures”

published in 2022 sets out three areas of focus: income through employment; income through benefits and the cost of living. A further focus to be considered is supporting people and mitigating the impacts of poverty. Our local Child Poverty Action Group does not manage all of the actions and interventions under these headings but rather tries to act as an information sharing and coordinating group that also brings the work together into an action plan report, which is a legal requirement by the Scottish Government. In fulfilling this role the group is sometimes able to bring people together to come up with new and innovative ways to tackle poverty; the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund is a notable example of this as is the work done on Infant Food Insecurity.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

To note the content of the report and the actions being carried out across Argyll and Bute to tackle child poverty.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2022 – 2023 was published at the end of 2023 and can be found on the Council's Challenge Poverty Website:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/money-advice/challenge-poverty>

This document noted the challenge of reducing child poverty levels at a time of cost of living crisis, a war in Ukraine and the remaining aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and leaving the European Union.

Most recent child poverty figures were released on 5th of June 2023, the End Child Poverty Coalition published the latest local child poverty figures. Their research, covering the period 2021–2022, provides the best available estimates of child poverty at the local authority level (below 60% of the median income after housing costs).

Argyll and Bute children in poverty (after housing costs)

Date	Percentage of Children in Poverty	Percentage Point Change
2014 - 2015	20.7%	
2020 - 2021	18.9%	-1.8%
2021 - 2022	21.7%	+2.8%

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and others note that Scotland has the lowest child poverty rate in the UK due to key factors including greater access to affordable social housing, the Scottish Child Payment and other local and national initiatives.

It should be noted that this year's national figures will be keenly awaited because The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 set four targets relating to ending child poverty, which the Scottish Government committed to trying to achieve by 2023 and 2030; these are all measured after housing costs are deducted. The targets for 2023 - 2024 are:

- Less than 18% of children are in relative poverty;
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- Less than 8% of children are in persistent poverty.

Every year each local authorities Child Poverty Action Plan Report is reviewed by someone from a national assessment team that includes people from the Improvement Service, the Poverty Alliance and SPIRU. Argyll and Bute's last report was reviewed by Becky Hothersall from the Poverty Alliance who said that the report was very good and comprehensive. Three areas for possible improvement were highlighted and these will be addressed in the next report (2023 - 2034) to be written in 2024. These were:

- Recognizing the unaffordability and lack of availability of public transport in rural areas, more strategic focus on transport as a key enabler of poverty in next year's plan – including reflecting wider work that is happening in the region and linking this to child poverty.
- Establish greater clarity on the overarching, strategic approach to tackling child poverty in A&B – including stronger linkages between identified strategies and objectives with data; policymaking; and lived experience engagement.
- Expand pre-existing work on lived experience to a wider range of stakeholders, with a particular focus on parents.

Some key Areas Relating to Tackling Child Poverty 2023 – 2024.

4.2 – Housing - Argyll and Bute Council was the first local authority in Scotland to declare a Housing Emergency in June 2023. In October 2023, the Council launched two surveys asking for views on housing from the community and businesses. In total, the Council received 688 responses to the community and 72 responses to the workforce survey, indicating that most of the respondents (92%) felt their communities were negatively impacted by the housing shortage. A Housing Emergency Summit was held in November 2023, bringing together 90 partners from public, private, third and community sectors who pledged their support to take decisive and bold action to address the housing emergency.

Of concern includes:

- 3,290 people on the housing waiting list, 8% more than last year.
- 253 households classified as homeless, 15% more than last year, and 127 currently in temporary accommodation.
- In 22/23, 811 new social rented tenancies were created and this is still a little lower than pre-pandemic. In 2022, there were 4 applicants per tenancy created.
- 5% less social rented stock than the Scottish Average.

- 6% second homes (0.9% average in Scotland (highest level of second homes ownership in Scotland)).

Partnership delivery planning prioritised the implementation of 39 housing emergency actions aimed at tackling housing shortage. The Housing Summit report can be seen here.

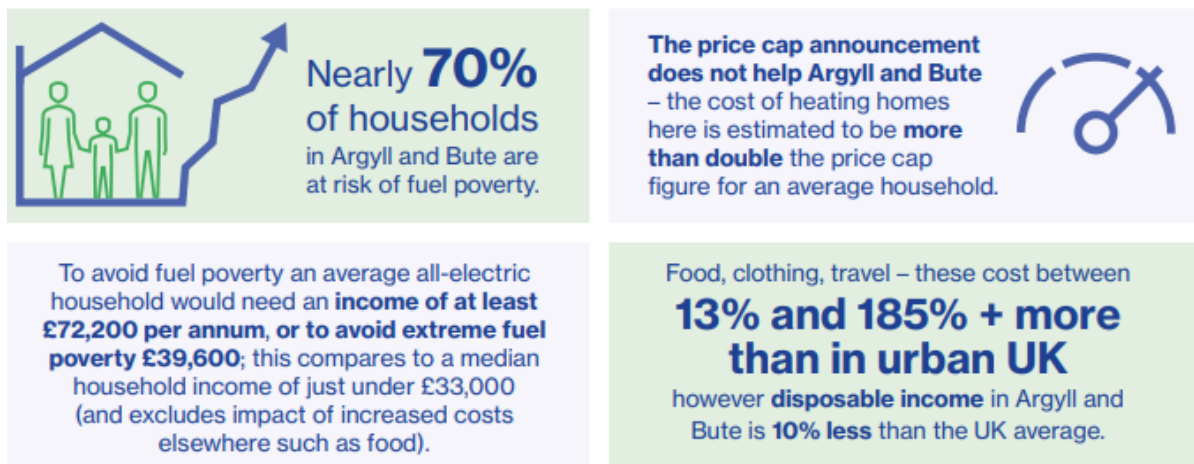
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/Argyll%20Bute%20Housing%20Emergency%20Summit%20Outcomes%20Report%202024.pdf>

A final version of the Argyll & Bute Housing Emergency Action will be launched across Housing Summit partners by spring 2024.

4.3 Fuel Poverty –

Argyll and Bute – cost of living crisis case for support; our situational brief.

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s189147/Corporate%20cost%20of%20living_4.pdf



Argyll and Bute Council recognises the impact of fuel poverty on children and families. It sends this message to Government and works with third sector partners like ALLenergy to mitigate the impacts. It also provides dedicated Council webpages to give people advice on how and where to get help.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/money-advice/heat-your-home-managing-rising-costs>

The Flexible Food and Fuel Fund is a key support to a large number of people in fuel poverty. Work is being done by our housing partners and others to improve our housing stock and provide grants to home owners to improve insulation levels etc.

4.4 Flexible Food and Fuel Fund - This fund combines grants with advice services. If granted, monies are given for food and fuel; if service users consent to accept advice services input, from the Bute Advice Centre and ALLenergy, they can be considered for

a further grant. From 14 January 2021 to 31 December 22 the project, has supported 1,627 households who are suffering from food and fuel insecurities in Argyll and Bute, with a combined client gain of £2,353,670. Bute Advice Centre and Allenergy continue to work hard in locating those who could benefit from the funding and look forward to rolling out the project in the next two financial years.

When applications are made for the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund, applicants are also matched against entitlement for other grants for consideration. Where people are claiming Council Tax Reduction and do not appear to be claiming other grants that they may be entitled to, they are contacted to make them aware of this. People are reminded through Schools, media posts etc. that even though their child may automatically now be getting free school meals as a universal offering, they should still put in their application as it makes them eligible for other benefits.

4.5 Data Analysis – work is being carried out try and improve local child poverty data and, importantly, to better identify families requiring advice and support and who may not be claiming their full entitlement of benefits. This work is being led by David Murdoch and Fergus Walker and focuses on the use of a Power BI model and looks at using a number of different data sets including Council Tax Reduction, Free School Meals Grants and School Clothing Grants. It is hoped we will be able to identify need at a postcode and School catchment level.

This work is complex and different approaches are being tried by various local authorities across Scotland. Argyll and Bute achieved a grant of £16,000 from the Child Poverty Action Fund to purchase CACI (Disposable Income figures) data sets to add to the model. Argyll and Bute is also one of three local authorities working with SAVVI (Scalable Approach to Vulnerability via Interoperability), via the Improvement Service. This work is looking at identifying legal gateways that will allow us to use the identified data for the purpose required, without breaching GDPR regulations. For example, the use of the Digital Economy Act 2017 as the legal gateway for Council Tax Reduction and Council Tax Arrears, is being considered.

4.6 Employability Measures – The Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership believes that supporting people to gain employability skills and good employment opportunities helps to increase household incomes and reduce poverty. The importance of this key area of work is also recognised by the Scottish Government and they are funding Employability Child Poverty coordinator roles situated within each of the 32 Local Authorities. This role will provide an additional resource to support the delivery of commitments set out in Best Start Bright Futures (Scottish Govt. Tackling child poverty delivery plan) by ensuring alignment between Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) and wrap-around services that support parents' transition or progression within work, such as childcare and transport. Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership is in the process of recruiting a Coordinator to work alongside employability partners and child poverty leads.

Key examples of work carried out by the Employability Partnership include: **No One Left Behind: Tackling Child Poverty**

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/jobs-and-training/helping-people-work>

The main objectives/expected outcomes of this Scottish Government Funding is:

- To reduce levels of child poverty by supporting parents from the priority family groups to increase their income from employment;
- To reduce inequality in the labour market by supporting those further from the labour market to increase their income from employment.
- To maximise the role that employability plays in delivering national and local aims of tackling poverty, promoting inclusion and social justice and creating a fair and prosperous Scotland.

From 1st April 2022 to 31 March 2023, 371 participants commenced support. Of these participants:

- 157 moved into work
- 25 commenced volunteering
- 59 not currently in a positive destination
- 130 continuing to receive pre-work support
-

In 2023/24, delivery of **employability support** is available to 159 participants aged 15 to 67 years by providers from the Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership. This intervention is managed and monitored by the Employability Team:

- InspirAlba is leading a large Third Sector Consortium providing tailored support packages to 130 All Age participants across Argyll and Bute. Working in partnership with MAYDS, Fyne Futures, Centre 81, The Help Project and Oban Youth Café. ALLenergy and Bute Advice also provide specialist support in terms of income maximisation, debt and fuel costs.
- Workingrite is delivering in partnership with MAYDS in Mid Argyll, Oban, Lorn and the Isles. 25 All Age participants will be supported within paid, mentored work placements with local small businesses and real opportunities for fair and sustainable employment.
- The Employability Team is continuing to support 4 participants aged 25 plus through an Employer Recruitment Incentive.

Two further interventions are available to 28 parents:

- To address the lack of childminders in the area, a childminder pilot will support 4 parents to transition from benefits to self-employment.
- A budget cookery pilot will engage with 24 parents to enable them learn and gain confidence to cook healthy filling meals on a budget. Skills and training obtained will be transferable to hospitality sector.

The **Parental Welfare Fund** is aimed at parents receiving support through Parental Employability Support/Tackling Child Poverty and who successfully secure employment. It helps with the transition to work and can alleviate any worries.

Up to £1,000 is available:

- £500 at outset of employment
- £250 at week 6 of employment
- £250 at week 13 of employment

Payments can be split and paid flexibly over a 3 month period to suit individual requirements and can fund:

- Timing of salary versus UC payments
- Initial childcare costs and deposits
- Existing debts
- Transport costs
- Clothes for work
- Buying coffees or lunches at work

4.7 - Transport

Transport is noted as an important factor related to child poverty, particularly in remote, rural and island places. In Public Health Scotland's 2024 publication "Transport Poverty: a Public Health Issue" transport poverty is defined as:

the lack of transport options that are available, reliable, affordable, accessible or safe that allow people to meet their daily needs and achieve a reasonable quality of life

Transport poverty can affect many aspects of people's lives including employment, inclusion, education and training, family life and health. The Islands Strategic Group has a Transport Forum and the need for improvements in transport and related infrastructure is note in Council plans. The key discussion points that the Local Authorities would like to focus on are:

- Local authority operated ferry services;
- The lack of resilience in the ferry network and current maintenance issues.

Transport is clearly a very real concern for people in Argyll and Bute; in the course of the consultation for the new Outcome Improvement Plan the three priorities selected by most people were:

Overall, the top 3 priorities chosen from the 1,978 participants were:

- Transport Infrastructure,
- Housing,
- Community Wellbeing

Planned actions are reflected in the Argyll and Bute Annual Business Plan 2023 – 2024

[Annual Business Plan 2023 to 2024 Final.pdf \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

For example:

Reviewing our approach to road repair prioritisation to make the most effective use of resources in the context of budget pressures and to achieve the best possible balance in terms of strategic, operational and member input

Other examples include are looking at the potential of upgrading the walking, wheeling and cycling route between Dunoon and Hunters Quay using funding received from [Sustrans](#). Upgrading the route offers several potential benefits such as:

- Making it easier for people to get to and from local shops and other destinations in Dunoon and Kilmoryton
- Improving accessibility of the promenade for more vulnerable people, including disabled people
- Making the area surrounding the route more inviting.

And Active Travel Apps provided by the Council.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/better-journeys>

Also in a March Bulletin the Chief Executive said that

- Strategic transport links and infrastructure plays a huge role Earlier this week, for the first time, our Executive Leadership held a joint management meeting with Transport Scotland. We outlined some of the key challenges Argyll and Bute continue to face and together agreed a number of actions across a number of issues. They include exploring opportunities for joint working on future public transport plans, the A82 and current and future demands for energy for our infrastructure. We look forward to this partnership in practice and securing positive benefits for Argyll and Bute.

Advice services have reported an increase in people having difficulties in meeting the costs of transport to Hospital appointments, often out with the area. “Near Me” remote options are in place for some medical needs and are being developed further, however trips to hospitals on the mainland and in Glasgow are sometimes necessary. For those living on island it is a cost issue coupled with a ferry disruptions issue. There are supports provided by the NHS in these circumstances and the HSCP intend to set up a SLWG looking at how to support people in crisis, such as fleeing from domestic violence; this will include looking at working with transport providers more effectively.

4.8 Advice Services – Effective advice services are key to tackling child poverty and ensuring that people have the information they require to claim their full benefit entitlement, manage debt etc. Figures on client gain demonstrate how successful this area of activity is in Argyll and Bute.

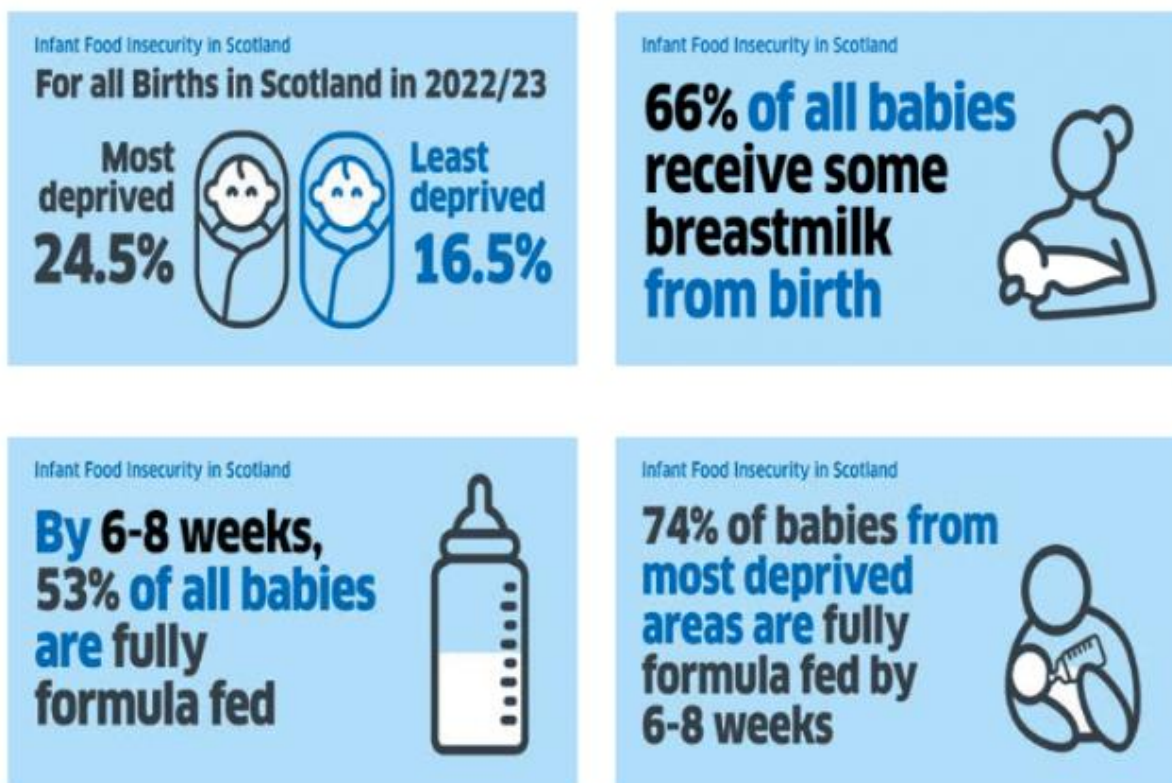
Advice Services across Argyll and Bute have managed to make a considerable difference in the lives of people who are struggling. The table below shows the client gain from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 for the citizens of Argyll and Bute as £10,849,000.

Organisation	2022/2023 (£'000)
Bute Advice Centre	2.249
Argyll and Bute Council Welfare Rights Service	4.324
ACHA Welfare Rights	2.690
Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau	0.875
ALLenergy	0.275
Fyne Homes	0.426
TOTAL	10.839

4.9 Islands Strategic Group – Argyll and Bute is part of this group organised by the Scottish Government. It met in October 2023 to look at issues relating to child poverty; these included: the cost of living crisis, transport, migration issues and labour shortages, island fuel poverty and the lack of child care. Argyll and Bute is part of the work taking place to develop a National Islands Plan.

4.10 Infant Food Insecurity – Infant food insecurity has been identified as an issue of concern in Scotland. The Argyll and Bute SLWG on Infant Food Insecurity met on 11th of January and agreed a leaflet to advise people with new babies or expecting a baby, on where to get help if they were experiencing infant food pressures. 1,000 copies of this have been printed and sent out to: Health Visitors, Midwives, School Nurses, ALLenergy, Bute Advice Centre and the Council's Welfare Rights Team. A printable copy has been shared with Social Workers that can be printed off when required by Workers. Rachel McNicol from ALLenergy and Julie Semple from Bute Advice have conducted training with Health Visitors, Midwives and School Nurses in the use of the new leaflets and advising service users. A similar leaflet has been created for the use of School Family Liaison Officers and training provided. We are now looking at possible pathways

to provide emergency cash or voucher options to purchase baby formula.



4.11 – January 2024 - Example of good, proactive practice in health - With the poverty agenda in mind, the health visitors in Helensburgh and Lochside have commenced a weekly drop-in session for parents that will focus on feeding, weaning and providing support, advice and signposting to relevant organisations

4.12 - Training – Argyll and Bute is continuing its efforts to train staff to be poverty aware and able to support people. An example is the continued roll out of Money Counts Training to staff across Argyll and Bute. The Money Counts Level 1 awareness session was co-developed by the Highland Money Counts Partnership including the Trussell Trust, NHS Highland, Highland Council and Social Security Scotland, in partnership with the Independent Food Aid Network and Nourish Scotland. This is a short, 45 minute awareness session, delivered remotely through Teams for anyone who may feel less confident and experienced about discussing money worries, but may be in a position to have a brief conversation with individuals and signpost on. This session is targeted at anyone from health, education and social care staff; 3rd sector workers and volunteers; warm place volunteers and anyone who may be able to start a brief conversation about money worries.

The session aims to:

- Increase understanding of poverty and its impact;
- Increase confidence to ask about money worries;
- Increase knowledge of support services for money matters.

Money Counts Totals

Date of session	Session Number	A&B Attendees	RT	Confidence before	Accumulative average	Confidence after	Accumulative average	Knowledge before	Accumulative Average	Knowledge After	Accumulative Average
2022	8	33	33	6.7	6.7	8.5	8.5	7.1	7.1	8.5	8.5
2023											
22.2.23	1	1	1	4	4.0	6.0	6.0	7.0	7.0	8.0	8.0
07.03.23	2	7	8	6.6	5.3	8.3	7.2	4.6	5.8	6.7	7.4
22.03.23	3	3	11	5.7	5.4	8.3	7.5	4.0	5.2	8.0	7.6
04.04.23	4	2	13	6.5	5.7	7.5	7.5	7	5.7	6.5	7.3
19.04.23	5	2	15	4.5	5.5	7.0	7.4	4.0	5.3	6.5	7.1
17.05.23	Session did not go ahead										
31.05.23	6	3	18	5.4	5.5	8.0	7.5	5.6	5.4	8.0	7.3

Another example would be the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss) are delivering a webinar on island child poverty on the 21st of March for rural Social Workers and others, speakers will be Colin Gilmour (Health Improvement Head, Western Isles) and Councillor Angus McCormack (Western Isles) and Mandy Sheridan for AB. IRISS are also holding an online conference in May for Social Workers, one of the topics here will be Rural Child Poverty.

4.13 Engagement – It is important to engage with children, young people and others in terms of the work relating to tackling child poverty. Since developing our first Child Poverty Action Report in 2019 this has been done in a variety of ways; through engagement with School Councils, Youth Voice and other groups; through engagement and information sharing via networks like Living Well; through media campaigns throughout the year and particularly during Challenge Poverty Week; through the production of aids such as the graphic version of the plan (Plan on a Page).

This past year engagement specifically on child poverty alone has been difficult due to other large scale engagement required, for example relating to UNCRC Implementation and to the new ABOIP. However this work in itself has provided feedback and information relating to child poverty. The UNCRC work resulted in a £53,000 grant from the UNCRC Innovations fund to be spent in 2024 with conducting face to face engagement events for children and young people across Argyll and Bute about their rights. This is important because Royal assent has been achieved for the Bill and it is now the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, which comes into force in July 2024.

Lack of a budget to develop group consultation with lived experience people has always been a difficulty in local engagement on child poverty. However this year the Poverty Alliance have funds to develop a project called “Taking Action on Rural Poverty” which will work with a recruited lived experience groups in Aberdeenshire and Argyll and Bute to:

- Support people with direct experience of poverty and trauma to collaborate with community and voluntary organisations, the private sector and public bodies to address the poverty premium.
- Strengthen connections and collaboration between rural organisations and support them to network and undertake anti-poverty advocacy work.
- We learn about change in taking a participatory approach to tackling the rural poverty premium.

Our local Child Poverty Action Group will be working with the Poverty Alliance in this endeavour and hope to be able to build on this work in coming years.

4.14 Warm Spaces - The Third Sector Interface have been key in setting up warm spaces and supporting their member organisations. Their focus is on supporting the health of community groups and their capacity to respond to the cost of living crisis. They have commissioned a “Health of Our Sector” survey on the cost of living and volunteering. Initial key findings are: It is increasingly hard to get volunteers and this mirrors Volunteer Scotland’s research. Increase in travel costs for volunteers travelling to volunteer is an issue. Transport costs are also an issue for those whom organisations seek to help. In remote, rural and island places people may have to be able to put fuel into their cars in order to get to warm places or to food banks.

The TSI are in the process of updating our comprehensive list of Warm Spaces throughout the region where people can gather, stay warm, and connect. These spaces are open to the public or available for organisational meetings to help reduce heating costs.

The goal is to create a comprehensive directory that encompasses public, private, health, and voluntary sectors. This directory will serve as a guide for those seeking warmth and companionship during the colder months.

Warm Spaces

Please follow the link to the Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface for warm spaces in your area. [warmspace locality - Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface \(argylltsi.org\)](http://warmspace.locality - Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface (argylltsi.org))

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 This brief report gives a snapshot of some of the work being done in Argyll and Bute to tackle child poverty. It is not under the auspices of any one group, department or organisation but is rather recognised as a key action for all. Just as ensuring children’s rights are respected is a duty for everyone, so must tackling child poverty, which is surely a children’s rights issue, concern everyone.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy

Child Poverty Action Plan

6.2 Financial

Costs relating to individual actions. Failing to act would impact on our future generations and economic factors dependent on them.

6.3 Legal

Duties under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and report annually.

6.4 HR

6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:

6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics

6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty

6.5.3 Islands

6.6 Climate Change

6.7 Risk

Risk of increasing poverty levels in actions are not taken.

6.8 Customer Service

6.9 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Article 26 - You have the right to help from the government if you are poor or in need. Article 27 - You have the right to a good enough standard of living. This means you should have food, clothes and a place to live

Executive Director with responsibility for [HSCP]

Policy Lead [Evan Beswick]

[21.3.2024]

For further information contact: Mandy Sheridan. Mandy.Sheridan@argyll-bute.gov.uk

2022-2023 :::::.....

Argyll & Bute Child Poverty *Action Plan Review*



Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan – Review 2022 – 2023

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Foreword

Welcome to the fourth review of the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan. It has been a challenging year that has seen us still dealing with the ongoing impacts of the Covid19 Pandemic and exit from the European Union. As well, sadly the war in Ukraine continues and we are facing a cost of living crisis and the highest rate of inflation in 40 years. Through all of this it remains vital to continue to tackle poverty and its impacts on our children, young people and families.

Our outgoing Children and Young People's Commissioner, Bruce Adamson, said that "Poverty is a right to life issue". In a time where some parents are having to make decisions about whether to heat their homes or put food on the table, never has this been truer. 2023 will see the United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child become a part of Scots Law and we welcome this and the focus it will bring to ensuring that children are listened to, their rights respected and importantly in terms of child poverty, their right to life, survival and development (Article 6).

We also welcome SNAP 2: Scotland's Second National Human Rights Action Plan (2023-2030). This sets out a series of priorities and first amongst these is to "Achieve a decent standard of living." It goes on to say:

Poverty is a human rights issue that engages many human rights standards that are interdependent and interrelated. This includes – but isn't limited to – equality and non-discrimination, the right to an adequate standard of living, food, housing, social security, health, work, education, participation, private and family life.

We recognise this and commit to taking a rights approach to tackling poverty and its impacts. We have already done this in our training of staff on child poverty and we are looking at developing data systems that identify where we can focus our supports whilst respecting the rights and dignity of people. We will work to ensure that there is co-production on key strategies and decisions. A great example of this is the development of our new Local Outcome Improvement Plan where we have co-produced extensively, including with 40 community groups, schools and 18 youth groups amongst others. We also provided accessible information that allowed a wide range of people to participate, for example those with disability or from marginalised groups. Over 1,900 people responded across Argyll and Bute and told us that their priorities were transport infrastructure, housing and community wellbeing with financial inclusion the 4th selected.

People experience poverty through no fault of their own and we know that it can be harder for single parent families, larger families, young families, families where there is a disability and for some ethnic minority families. As well in Argyll and Bute our people who live in remote, rural and island places, face extra challenges with fuel, food and transport costing more and childcare sometimes being more difficult to access.

We will continue to work together to find ways of tackling these challenges and make things better for everyone. This report is about some of the ways we are trying to achieve this and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our staff whose hard work and dedication make them possible.

As well, communities, individuals and third sector organisations have all played a part in supporting those impacted on by the cost of living crisis and welcoming refugees from Ukraine and other parts of the world; thank you all. Argyll and Bute may be beautiful but it is our people who make it a great place to live.



Introduction

2022 - 2023 has seen a crucial need to tackle a cost of living crisis that has seen more families thrown into poverty. Inflation in the UK has risen to its highest rate for 40 years and put pressure on families who are struggling to meet the ever rising costs of basics like fuel, food and housing.

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (The links between housing and poverty an evidence review" by Turnstall for JRF 2013) concluded that Scotland had kept its poverty rate lower than other parts of the UK due to having greater access to affordable social housing. The report found that poverty levels before housing costs were similar in Scotland and England, but once housing costs have been factored in, there is a decrease in poverty rates. This view is supported by the Resolution Foundation, which state.

"Scotland has been the part of the UK with the lowest child poverty ratereflecting the fact that Scotland enjoys relatively high earnings but without the same degree of housing cost pressure."

The laws of supply and demand dictate that a lack of housing supply will result in higher house prices and rents. Housing is often a family's most significant monthly expense, so affordable rent can substantially impact poverty figures.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report stated that the difference in rates between Scotland was not only having lower rents in the social rented sector than the rest of the UK, but also a higher proportion of social rented properties. The report concluded that continued support for increasing the stock of social rented housing is likely to be a significant factor in preventing the incidence of poverty from rising in Scotland. As well poverty in Scotland has been reduced by a number of key Social Security Benefits, particularly the Scottish Child Payment. This weekly payment of £25 for each child under the age of 16-years has helped to keep many families out of poverty.

Research has found that in remote rural and island communities, high property prices coupled with an additional minimum living cost of 15-30% can prevent the recruitment and retention of staff, especially those on lower levels of pay such as child-care workers. This can result in crucial child development services such as wrap-around child-care or nursery provision being unavailable or only available in distant locations. Quality early year's provision is vital to lift children out of poverty, so if children are denied these services, the cycle of poverty is unlikely to be broken.

In addition, Public Health Scotland and other bodies have pointed to health issues caused by poverty and disadvantage. New research by the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit at the University of Glasgow revealed "stark and concerning data" - including that children in deprived areas are 2.6 times as likely to die in their first 12 months as children in less deprived areas.

Children born into poverty are more likely to experience a wide range of health problems – including poor nutrition, chronic disease and mental health problems – than those born into affluent families.

Child Poverty in Scotland: health impact and health inequalities. NHS Health Scotland, 2018

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that:

There is evidence that suggests low incomes are associated with potential symptoms of anxiety, such as lack of sleep, lacking energy and feelings of depression. For children, even at a young age, there is a gap in young people's educational attainment by parental income level, and this continues throughout the different stages of a child's education. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has generally widened the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged pupils in the UK, with reasons for this including the digital divide, home learning environments and falling incomes.

2021/22		Most deprived 20% of areas (%)	Least deprived 20% of areas (%)	Attainment gap
Aged 11	Percentage of primary 7 achieving literacy	56	80	24 percentage points
	Percentage of primary 7 achieving numeracy	62	85	23 percentage points
Aged 16-18	One or more at SCQF at level five on leaving school	78	96	18 percentage points

UK Poverty 2023: The Essential Guide to Understanding Poverty in the UK; Joseph Rowntree Foundation; 26th January 2023

In Argyll and Bute a Cost of Living Crisis Group has been bringing the Council and its partners together to share and coordinate support efforts and come up with strategies to tackle poverty and its impacts. Coordinated local efforts are key to recognising and combatting the particular challenges posed by our area. These include a relatively small and aging population that is spread over a large geographical area that encompasses 5 towns, many remote, rural areas and 23 inhabited islands. Employment is largely within sectors such as tourism and hospitality, which are traditionally low paid and seasonal. Argyll and Bute, whilst it has a high proportion of its population employed and many self-employed, lacks an industrial base and the Council and Health Board are amongst the biggest employers.

Gross weekly wages are lower than the Scottish national average and the gender pay gap remains an issue.

Earnings by Place of Residence (2022)

Gross Weekly Pay	Argyll & Bute (Pounds)	Scotland	Great Britain
Full Time Workers	586.3	640.3	642.2
Male Full Time Workers	636.9	675.1	687.5
Female Full Time Workers	552.1	604.7	584.5

Hourly Pay Excluding Overtime	Argyll & Bute (Pounds)	Scotland	Great Britain
Full Time Workers	14.98	16.59	16.37
Male Full Time Workers	15.51	16.91	16.97
Female Full Time Workers	14.48	16.29	15.49

All of this means that to address child poverty in the long term, employability measures and encouraging business growth is key, as is the need for the Scottish Government to recognise the particular challenges faced by remote, rural and island places and to offer these local authorities appropriate targeted supports.

Reason for the Review

In 2017 the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act came into force as an attempt to put in place measures that would reduce the concerning increase in child poverty, both on a national and local level. The Act also introduced a new requirement for local authorities and each relevant Health Board to jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Report, as soon as practicable after the end of each reporting year.

The 2017 Act set four targets relating to ending child poverty, which the Scottish Government committed to trying to achieve by 2023 and 2030; these are all measured after housing costs are deducted. The targets for 2023 - 2024 are:

- Less than 18% of children are in relative poverty;
- Less than 14% of children are in absolute poverty;
- Less than 8% of children are in combined low income and material deprivation;
- Less than 8% of children are in persistent poverty.

Targets for 2030 are:

- less than 10% of children live in relative poverty (relative poverty is less than 60% of average household income for the year taking account of the size and composition of the household);
- less than 5% of children live in absolute poverty (absolute poverty is less than 60% of average household income for the financial year beginning 1 April 2010);
- less than 5% of children live in combined low income and material deprivation (low income is defined as less than 70% of average household income for the year, material deprivation is when families are unable to afford three or more items out of a list of basic necessities);
- less than 5% of children live in persistent poverty (persistent poverty is where a child has lived in relative poverty for three out of the last four years).

With the impacts of the Covid19 pandemic and exiting the European Union still with us, the cost of living crisis deepening and the war in Ukraine continuing, it is clear that it is becoming ever harder to reach the targets or indeed set out plans to keep on this path. April 2022 saw the greatest fall in the value of the basic rate of unemployment benefits since 1972, when annual uprating began and, as the cost of living has continued to rise throughout 2022, the real term purchasing power of households receiving these benefits has continued to fall.

Scotland does have a lower rate of poverty (18%) than England (22%) and Wales (24%) and around the same rate as Northern Ireland (17%).

Our Vision

This review is also where we in Argyll and Bute show what actions we are taking to tackle child poverty and how well we work together to achieve our vision of no children living in households affected by poverty and deprivation.

We want an Argyll and Bute where no-one lives in poverty. Everyone should be able to achieve their potential and feel healthy, happy and valued. We want to be a place where everyone understands that tackling poverty is a shared responsibility. We believe that if we act locally, and in partnership, we can make a difference.

Engagement and Listening

It is important to listen to what people are saying about our services and efforts to tackle child poverty and other key issues; without this we are simply telling people what we think is best for them. Article 12 of the United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) says that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right needs to be at the heart of everything we do, our Child Poverty Action Plans, Children's Services Plans and Local Outcome Improvement Plans. Some of what we do can be termed co production and can be defined as:

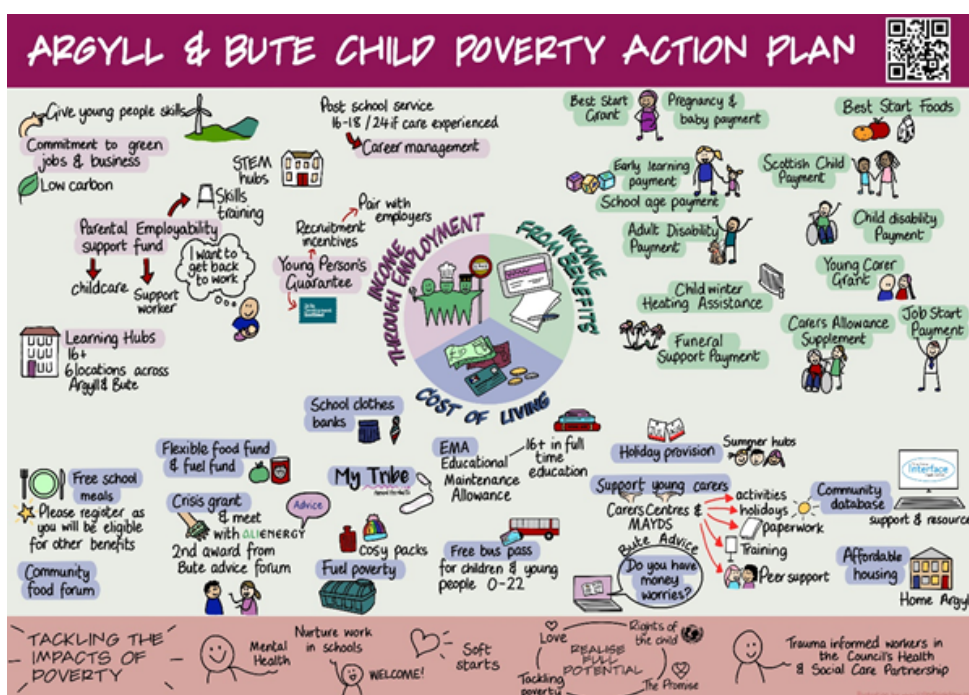
The process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not 'in' the same organization

Ostrom, Elinor. 1996. Crossing the Great Divide: Coproduction, Synergy, and Development. *World Development* 24(6): 1073–87. (1996, 1073).

Sometimes this is not always possible, where for example there are limited resources and what needs to happen (services or benefits being delivered in a certain way) is determined by those other than the people who will be delivering the service. For example we can ask pupils how they would like maths taught and we can perhaps use some of their ideas but what ultimately is put in place is determined to a greater degree by what the curriculum says needs to be taught.

Other things that might get in the way, or be a challenge to coproduction, include: resources, competing demands, geography and demography. In Argyll and Bute we have a relatively small and ageing population set over a large geographical area that includes many island and rural places. Many key policies and plans are seeking voices and views of people impacted by them and there is the risk of repeatedly going back to the same young people, groups and communities for their views and causing overload. We and other local authorities are on a learning journey; how best to engage and involve whilst keeping it meaningful, enjoyable and real, particularly for children and young people.

This year there has been considerable engagement and coproduction for our Children's Service Plan, LOIP and for individual services, like the Council's Welfare Rights Service. With Child Poverty we continue to engage with children and young people and others using our Plan on a Page and this is going well. We hope to do more in the coming year.



Increasing Demands for benefit checks and Advice Services - The Council's Welfare rights Service also noted increased number of referrals for benefit checks and income maximisation. It is clear many clients are experiencing hardship due to the cost of living crisis with fuel costs being a major factor. In many cases clients have all the benefits they are entitled to in place and the only option is to refer on to other support agencies. This is reflected in the experiences of other members including: Benefits; Bute Advice Centre; ABCAB; Allenergy; Home Energy Scotland; Carr Gomm; Fyne Homes Housing Association, Dunbritten Housing Association; Debt Counselling and Warm and Well Argyll and Bute.

Fuel costs in remote, rural and island places are a particular problem with no mains gas being available and LPG and other options having to be used. Most islands also lack wood and similar options and these require to be transported over from the mainland.

Community Food Forum members are seeing more families with children presenting and fuel costs being a particular issue. They continue to receive crisis enquiries from people in fuel poverty. They are particularly seeing people with electric storage heating which is expensive to run. The Scottish Government has given the Council £197,000 to support people on the islands. From this, grant payments of £5,000 to each of 4 island based foodbank organisations to support their work.

Actions Taken to Support People

Warm Places Initiative – A wide range of organisations across Argyll and Bute have coordinated their efforts and produced “warm places” that provide warmth, snacks, company and advice and activities. A guide has been produced and widely circulated through the media and other resources.

<https://www.argylltsi.org/warmspaces.html>

Flexible Food and Fuel Fund - This fund combines grants with advice services. If granted, monies are given for food and fuel; if service users consent to accept advice services input, from the Bute Advice Centre and Allenergy, they can be considered for a further grant. From 14 January 2021 to 31 December 22 the project, has supported 1,627 households who are suffering from food and fuel insecurities in Argyll and Bute, with a combined client gain of £2,353,670. Bute Advice Centre and Allenergy continue to work hard in locating those who could benefit from the funding and look forward to rolling out the project in the next two financial years.

Housing - They continue to work with Mecopp and the Gypsy Travelling communities. Contacts have been made to ensure that these communities are aware of the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund.

A total of £555K spent on delivering energy efficiency improvements to 55 properties. In addition funding has been secured to work in partnership with ACHA to insulate mixed tenure properties and work has started in Cowal.

COVID Tenant Rent Arrears Fund assisted 70 households with rent arrears at a total cost of around £91K. Council has now spent all this funding. There is still the Rent Arrears Fund around Rapid Rehousing that can help with rent arrears.

Community Food Forum - In the recent months more families with children have been presenting. They continue to receive crisis enquiries from people in fuel poverty – some are old clients and some are new who are seeing a rise in their energy prices.

The Parental Welfare Fund - This is a new initiative the Employability Team have launched and is being delivered through Inspiralba. It is intended to help with the transition to work and alleviate any worries. Up to £1,000 is available in 3 stages to help with childcare costs, existing debts, transport costs, clothes for work and buying coffees or lunches.

Parental Employment Support Fund / Spark Your Promise - Many clients are struggling to focus on work when they have very real critical problems such as their children needing winter coats, no access to broadband, rent arrears etc. A bespoke package is available to support each client.

Welfare Rights Officers - have since the start of the new financial year to the 28th February 2023 dealt with 1162 tenants, bringing in an annual amount to date of £3.3m.

ACHA Welfare Rights (Argyll Community Housing Association) - There continues to be a large amount of Attendance Allowance applications with reflects the aging population and a lot of clients looking for help applying for Adult Disability Payment. Warm Packs - Over £10,000 raised from contractors and consultants to buy warm packs that have a thermal blanket, gloves, hat and socks, hot water bottle, thermal mug and some soup to help keep warm. These are in ACHA offices and vans and cars of staff too. This has proved to be very helpful for tenants and a large number have been given out.

Benefits - Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grants - between 1 April 2022 and 31 January 2023 there were 701 awards paid out to the value of £65K. 13% increase for the same period last year and a 30% increase in spend. 192 applications in January 2023 which is the highest number we have ever had.

Scottish Welfare Fund Community Care Grants – between 1 April 2022 and 31 January 2023 there were 775 applications and 365 awards paid out to the value of £443K – this is an increase of £35K. Energy Bill Support Scheme - £530K funding from the UK Government – Council Tax Section will be making the payments and 66 applications were received on the first day.

When applications are made for the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund, applicants are also matched against entitlement for other grants for consideration. Where people are claiming Council Tax Reduction and do not appear to be claiming other grants that they may be entitled to, they are contacted to make them aware of this. People are reminded through Schools, media posts etc. that even though their child may automatically now be getting free school meals as a universal offering, they should still put in their application as it makes them eligible for other benefits.

Discretionary Housing Payments – as at 31 January 2023 spent and committed £760K out of a budget of £961K. The Council have a duty to pay DHPs to anyone on the benefit cap and looking at ways to automate DHP awards. As there is no Universal Credit data for Housing costs, need, is identified on application for this.

Scotland Loves Local Cards – cards to the value of £120 were issued in late November and as at 14 February 85.2% of cards have been activated with £680K spent in local areas.

Support for cost of living on Islands – Scottish Government have given £197,000 to the council to support people on the islands. Approx. 1,300 Scotland Loves Local Gift cards have been issued to islanders in receipt of Council Tax Reduction. £1.60 top up payments daily payments have also been issued to pupils in receipt of Free School Meals.

School Clothing Banks - Now live in the majority of the Argyll and Bute area. New web page is up and running with links to application forms. Still need to get the project set up in Mid Argyll and the Islands but expect to have this completed by the new school year. In promoting this initiative emphasis is placed on the benefits of recycling and protecting the planet.

Community Development - Argyll and Bute Supporting Communities Fund is open to community organisations to apply for up to £2,500 to support community projects and can be used to help tackle poverty. Applications closed on 30 March 2023.

Funding Alerts - A monthly Funding Alerts Bulletin is issued to allow communities, individuals and organisations to see what funding supports are available and can be applied for.

Schools - Webinar took place to increase awareness of the My Tribe initiative and the work the Grab Trust is doing to ensure period products are available to all.

Regular communications via schools is taking place to promote Free Bus Travel. Options are being explored to look at a new way to manage the NEC and increase engagement

Data

Data sources that we currently use tell us a great deal about the current situation in terms of poverty in Argyll and Bute, allowing us to look at changes. It can tell us about employment levels:

Employment and Unemployment (Oct.2021 - Sept. 2022)

All People	Argyll & Bute	Argyll & Bute %	Scotland %
Economically Active	40,600	78.6	77.2
In Employment	40,300	78	74.5
Employees	34,000	67.8	66.5
Self Employed	6,000	9.9	7.7
Unemployed	1,200	2.9	3.4

NOMIS

During the period Oct 2021 to September 2022, data advised 2.9% of Argyll & Bute's population are unemployed with national data for Scotland of 3.4%.

Number of workless households:

	Argyll & Bute	Scotland %
Number of Workless Households	2,900	329,200
% of Households that are Workless	13.5	18.6
Number of Children in Workless Households	?	102,400
% of Children in Workless Households	?	12

NOMIS

It can tell us the age of claimant:**Claimants by Age – Not Seasonally Adjusted (January 2023)**

Age	Argyll & Bute	Argyll & Bute %	Scotland %	UK %
16+	1,425	2.9	3.2	3.6
16 - 17	10	0.6	0.5	0.2
18 - 24	225	3.5	4.2	4.7
18 -25	115	3.2	4.4	4.7
25 - 49	730	3.3	3.7	4.1
50+	460	2.2	2.3	2.7

It can tell us where those claimants are:**At November 2022 Argyll & Bute Households on Universal Credit by ward; for example**

Job Centre	Single, with children	Couple, with children
Campbeltown	197	104
Dunoon	304	116
Helensburgh	316	106
Oban	455	182
Rothesay	157	74

Note. Data Source,
Job Centre locations in Argyll & Bute

And how many children are in families:**Numbers of Households in Argyll & Bute in receipt of Universal Credit at November 2022**

Job Centre	No children Age 0-4	1 child Age 0-4	2 children Age 0-4	3 or more children Age 0-4	Households without children
Campbeltown	182	98	15	6	474
Dunoon	267	120	34	5	659
Helensburgh	253	140	25	0	617
Oban	364	212	58	0	894
Rothsay	131	74	25	0	385
Total	1197	644	157	11	3029

Note. Data Source, Job Centre locations in Argyll & Bute

It can also tell us about child poverty levels:

On 5th of June 2023, the End Child Poverty Coalition published the latest local child poverty figures. Their research, covering the period 2021–2022, provides the best available estimates of child poverty at the local authority level (below 60% of the median income after housing costs).

Argyll and Bute children in poverty (after housing costs)

Date	Percentage of Children in Poverty	Percentage Point Change
2014 - 2015	20.7%	
2020 - 2021	18.9%	-1.8%
2021 - 2022	21.7%	+2.8%

Argyll and Bute - Children in Absolute Low Income 2021 / 2022

Absolute low-income is defined as a family whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of the 2010/11 median income adjusted for inflation. Gross income measure is Before Housing Costs (BHC) and includes contributions from earnings, state support and pensions.

Income is equivalised to adjust for household size and family composition

Children aged 0-4	Loner Parents	Couple
Not in working families	101	62
In working families	128	194
Children aged 5 - 10		
Not in working families	100	54
In working families	184	279
Children aged 11-15		
Not in working families	84	65
In working families	225	230
Children aged 16 -19		
Not in working families	53	34
In working families	153	141

Source –
Department of Work and Pensions

In January 2023 1425 (2.8%) of 16 year olds were claiming Out of Work Benefits, lower than the National average in Scotland of 3.2%. Out of Work Benefits in Argyll and Bute have been reported as lower than the Scottish National average with the exception of 16-17 year olds which is marginally higher.

All of the data referred to above is sourced from outside of the council. What it is less good at is telling us how we can identify families who are in immediate need and how we can target our resources to assist them. How do we know if they are claiming all the benefits and supports to which they are entitled to?

The Council is carrying out a project to look at innovative data use to identify unmet need in communities. The project will seek to use Microsoft Power BI to develop better ways of interconnecting data sources, from both inside and outside of the Council, in order to highlight areas of unmet need whilst ensuring that appropriate information governance is maintained, General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) are followed, etc. An intended benefit of using PowerBI for this purpose is to allow a large proportion of the report generation process to be automated so that reports can be run and checked more frequently without increasing the reporting burden on council teams. Whilst developing this they will work with the Improvement Service and the Rural and Island Child Poverty Leads Peer Support Network to share ideas and best practice with other local authorities on the same journey. A crucial challenge for the project is deciding whether to:

- a) Use data at household level so as to guide very targeted interventions, or
- b) Use data which has been aggregated, for example at school catchment or 2011 Census Output Area

The council has begun by exploring option (b) since it runs less risk of breaching acceptable practice on information governance. However to obtain improved outcomes option (a) would be preferred, although this option has greater information governance challenges. To explore these options a meeting is also planned with SAVVI (Scalable Approach to Vulnerability via Interoperability) to see if their approach to information governance might add value to the project.

Currently the project is exploring cross-referencing data sets including Council Tax Arrears Recovery Activity, Council Tax Reduction Claims and Scottish Welfare Fund Claims on a postcode and school catchment level. This should identify areas where people are under- claiming benefits and allow the Council's Welfare Rights Teams to offer advice and support by going into schools, community halls, or through other forms of engagement offer benefits advice. The same method will allow for the tracking of the expected improved benefits uptake as a consequence of these activities over time. Other data may also prove useful for this model, including school clothing grant uptake. The model can be used to combine data sets to achieve other objectives that are not specifically linked to meeting unmet need.

It is hoped that this data approach improves outcomes for our communities by ensuring that families receive all the benefits and advice they are entitled to and that this is achieved in a way that respects the privacy of individuals and families; advice and support will be offered to all in targeted school catchments and in terms of a general benefits and entitlement check.

Children and Young People's Service Plan 2023 – 2026

We want Argyll and Bute to be the best place in Scotland to grow up. The Argyll and Bute 2023–26 children and young people's service plan builds on previous plans and was developed by listening to and understanding the needs of our children, young people, and families.

This plan continues our focus on promoting children and young people's wellbeing, underpinned by Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), and extends this by developing our trauma informed workforce, ensuring we embed UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child), tackling child poverty and The Promise at the core of everything we do.

Our vision aligns with our aim of making Argyll and Bute the best place to grow up by:

- Providing a good quality of life, including good mental and physical wellbeing;
- Delivering high-quality universal services for everyone;
- Delivering better targeted services for vulnerable children;
- Respecting, protecting, and fulfilling children's and young people's rights;
- Tackling child poverty and inequality;
- Supporting family wellbeing;
- Understanding and addressing the influence of trauma and adverse childhood experiences;
- Improving outcomes for children, young people, and adults who have been in care.

We have fully committed to the promise made to Scotland's infants, children, young people, adults, and families. By 2030, we will transform our care system and the values around which it operates. Ensuring we uphold safe, loving relationships that are important to children and young people and that we continue the transformation of our community services to make sure more children are supported to stay safely with their families. Integral to this plan is building upon and embedding our commitment to the priorities and values of the Promise.

CYPSP 2023–2026 Priorities

Our CYPSP priorities are underpinned by GIRFEC and supported by several key delivery plans and performance measures.

- Young people are encouraged to maintain a healthy weight and increase their physical activity.
- Families are aided and directed to ensure that welfare benefits, Healthy Start vitamins, and vouchers are utilised.
- Preschool children meet their developmental milestones before starting school.
- Children and families are provided with effective support to maximise income and help reduce the adverse impacts of growing up in poverty.
- Children and young people are supported to make informed choices about sexual health.
- Partners work together and actively seek out and listen to the views and experiences of children, young people, and their families. The feedback shows key areas for improvement to ensure that their health and well-being requirements are met.
- Partners collaborate to develop and sustain breastfeeding communities in their communities.

Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan (ABOIP)

Argyll and Bute is currently developing its next Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) which will be a ten year plan running from 2024 to 2034. Co-production is very much at the heart of this and children and young people have been one of the groups who have been engaged with across Argyll and Bute in an attempt to hear the “lesser heard voices”. Local members of the Scottish Youth Parliament are a part of the Community Planning Partnership Management Committee that is leading this development and they helped to advise on ways to make materials and methods user friendly for a younger age group. A group supporting young people with a disability worked with the Community Development Team to adapt the consultation to be suitable for them. 18 youth groups were contacted and there was a high level of response to requests to engage using a pictographic survey form. Schools also took part.

Key to the engagement has been the desire to get participation that reflects the demographic and geographic features that make up our area. This saw over 40 community groups supported to participate and forms being translated into Gaelic and Ukrainian. Sessions included approximately 520 individuals. In addition, support was also focused on non-digital participants as identified by Connecting Scotland; these included:

- Low income households,
- People aged 60+,
- Disabled people,
- People in areas with poor/no connectivity,
- Those without essential digital skills.

Other, often low response groups, were another focus and included males and men’s sheds and men’s mental health groups were contacted. Launched on 5th December 2022, the consultation ended on 31st March 2023 and there were over 1978 participants. Participants were asked to give their views and to consider 7 themes and choose 3 which they thought should be the top priorities in the plan; they could also choose to add their own 3 choices.

The 7 themes suggested were:

- Climate Change;
- Community Wellbeing;
- Digital Inclusion;
- Diverse Economy and Skilled Workforce;
- Financial Inclusion;
- Housing;
- Transport Infrastructure

Overall, the top 3 priorities chosen from the 1,978 participants were:

- Transport Infrastructure,
- Housing,
- Community Wellbeing

Financial Inclusion was the 4th most chosen priority although it is interesting to note that it was in the top three for certain groups or areas:

- Helensburgh and Lomond;
- 0 - 34 and 85+ age groups;
- Those with a high impact disability;

Next steps for the development of the Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan will be a series of focus groups. So far almost 800 people have indicated that they would be willing to take part in these.

The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill was passed by the Scottish parliament on 16th of March 2021 but could not be made law because of a legal challenge brought by UK Government Law Officers. The Supreme Court ruled that certain parts of the Bill fell out with the competence of the Scottish Parliament and it was therefore reviewed by the Scottish parliament. It is anticipated that it will now be made law at some point in 2023.

What will this mean?

- Public authorities will not be allowed to act in a way which is incompatible with the UNCRC requirements.
- Children, young people, and their representatives will have the power to go to court to enforce their rights.
- Courts will have powers to decide if legislation is compatible with the UNCRC requirements.
- Existing legislation will have to be read in a way which is compatible with the UNCRC requirements wherever possible.
- Scottish Government will be able to change laws to make sure they are compatible with the UNCRC requirements.
- The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland and Scottish Human Rights Commission will have powers to take legal action to protect children's rights.
- Scottish Government will have to publish a Children's Rights Scheme to show how it is meeting the UNCRC requirements and explain its future plans to progress children's rights.
- Scottish Government will have to review how the Children's Rights Scheme is working each year.
- Other authorities listed in the Bill will have to report every three years on what they are doing to meet the UNCRC requirements. This will include local authorities.

In Argyll and Bute a multiagency, Council led group has been formed to develop an action plan to take forward the implementation of the UNCRC into the work of the local authority. This plan will be guided by "Getting Ready for UNCRC Incorporation Framework; A Practical Resource for Local Authorities in Scotland to prepare for UNCRC Incorporation", a resource provided by the Improvement Service.

This sets out 11 key areas:

- Leadership,
- Participation of Children and Young People;
- Empowerment of Children and Young People;
- Child Friendly Complaints Procedure;
- Training and Awareness Raising;
- Improving Practice - Tools and Resources to support your work;
- Publishing Child Friendly Information;
- Measuring Progress;
- Children's Rights Budgeting;
- Accountability and Reporting on Children's Rights;
- Non Discrimination / Rights at Risk.

Reporting Duty

Part 1, Section 2 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on listed public authorities to complete a children's rights report. Listed Public Authorities must every 3 years report on the steps they have taken within their area of responsibility to secure better or further effect of the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

In November 2020 Argyll and Bute produced a Children's Rights Report for the period 2020 -2023.

www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/helping-people-work

A new report will be produced in 2023, as is required by the Scottish Government. This report will look at action taken on children's rights locally in the last three years and set out the Action Plan going forward. Engagement and co-production with children and young people will inform this report and the action plan.

Trauma-Informed workforce

In 2019, Argyll and Bute Children's Services were selected by the Scottish Government as one of three areas to develop approaches to implementing the delivery of high-quality and sustainable trauma training across the children's workforce, including carers. The collaboration between education, psychology services, social work, CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service), and the third sector has been central to the delivery of this trial. Following a successful launch event held in Dunoon in December 2019, and despite the circumstances of the pandemic, we have successfully rolled out training across the workforce. At our Trauma Conference in November 2022, we celebrated our success and looked to the future with 135 practitioners, caregivers, managers, and young people. This conference celebrated the changes to practice that are making a difference to children, young people, and families, through the meaningful participation of young people, the work of the Family Placement Team, our nurturing schools, engagement with dyadic developmental practice and We have committed to further embedding our trauma-responsive children's services and children's workforce as a key strategic priority for the Children and Young People's Service Plan 2023–26, supported by the appointment of a trauma training coordinator to help embed training across services.

Key Areas of the Plan:

A. Increasing Income from Employment and Earnings

Employability

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/helping-people-work>

Delivery of the Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) continues within the broader context of the No One Left Behind policy direction.

Eligible participants must have the right to live and work in the UK and are:

- Lone Parents who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty
- Parents with a disability or families who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty and have a disabled child
- Parents who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty and have 3 or more children
- Parents from a minority ethnic background who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty
- Parents who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty and have a youngest child
- Parents who are aged <25 who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty

The main objectives/expected outcomes are to support the delivery of the Scottish Government's Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) to deliver a flexible and 17 user-based model of employability support for the parental groups identified in Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026, through appropriate support focusing on intensive key worker support.

Low income families are supported to increase their income through work, both through supporting parents to access paid employment and in helping those in lower paid jobs to progress to higher paid employment. Our PESF Engagement Workers deliver intensive in and out of work employability support, including person centred support to up-skill, apply for jobs, gain progression whilst employment, money advice, health support, motivational support, completed accredited training, etc.

A PESF Employer Recruitment Incentive (ERI) programme is also offered by Argyll and Bute Council. ERIs play an important role in supporting those with the greatest barriers to employment, to enable them to obtain and remain in sustainable employment.

The ERI is available to use as a contribution to the additional costs of recruiting and sustaining eligible participants in employment. The ERI can be utilised in several ways such as for additional supervisory costs, training, initial travel to work costs, specialist in work support, or wages.

Up to £6,000 per participant is available, this allows employers to offer unemployed parents the opportunity to move into permanent or a fixed term employment contracts of up to 18 months or more.

The **Parental Welfare Fund** is aimed at parents receiving support through the PESF who successfully secure employment. It helps with the transition to work and can alleviate any worries. This fund offers up to £1,000 payable over the first 13 weeks of employment.

As an alternative to PESF, unemployed parents also have the choice to receive support from the following employability options should they decide this support best meets their needs:

Fair Start Scotland (FSS) is currently being delivered by Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team on behalf of People Plus.

<http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/jobs-and-training/helping-people-work>

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/helping-people-work>

To be eligible participants must be:

- Living in Scotland and eligible to work in the United Kingdom;
- over 18 and out of work; or
- 16 or 17 and are either disabled or in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit

This service is targeted at those who wish to receive individually tailored support up to 12 months to find and remain in employment or self-employment.

The Young Person's Guarantee also offers Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs) of up to £6,000 per participant. This allows unemployed young parents aged 16 to 24 years the opportunity to move into permanent or a fixed term employment contracts of up to 18 months or more.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/helping-people-work>

Young people (including graduates) entitled to receive support through the YPG Employer Recruitment Incentive (ERI) are those who:

- Have the right to live and work in the UK
- Are currently resident in Argyll and Bute
- Are unemployed (or on a paid work experience programme such as Kickstart and Community Jobs Scotland) and meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - Disabled and/or deaf person (includes those experiencing mental health issues and those who have an impairment or long-term health condition)
 - Care experienced young people
 - Primary Carer
 - Person with a conviction (including Criminal Protective Orders)
 - No or limited work experience
 - Early leavers from the armed forces, veterans, and ex-forces personnel
 - Long-term unemployed (6 months or over) who are not on Community Work Placements
 - Person who has failed their ESA Work Capability Assessment
 - People from Ethnic Minority backgrounds and racial groups, with a targeted approach informed by local population data.
 - Gypsy/travelling community
 - Partner of current or ex-Armed Forces personnel
 - Person requiring support with language, literacy, or numeracy, including those for whom English is an additional language
 - Lone parent
 - Low skilled
 - A young person who was receiving additional support for learning in school
 - Refugee or other granted leave to stay in the UK
 - Homeless person (including temporary or unstable accommodation)
 - Person affected by substance misuse.

The No One Left Behind also offers Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs) of up to £6,000 per participant. This allows unemployed participants aged 25 to 67 years the opportunity to move into permanent or a fixed term employment contracts of up to 18 months or more.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/helping-people-work>

Participants entitled to receive support through the NOLB Employer Recruitment Incentive (ERI) must:

- Have the right to live and work in the UK
- Be aged between 25 and 67 years up to 67 years (Pensionable age) and experiencing barriers to employment;
- Reside in Argyll and Bute
- Be unemployed and not participating in the Scottish Government's Fair Start Scotland programme.

Successes and Challenges

Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF)

To date 65 parents across the 6 target group have signed up to receive support from the Employability Team's PESF Engagement Workers; 47 (72%) were unemployed and 18 (38%) low income employed on commencing support.

Of the 65 parents supported to date currently; 17 (26%) are now in employment, 9 (14%) have increased their income, 16 (25%) are undertaken/completed training, 3 (5%) are in full time education, 1 (25) is in custody and 19 (29%) have disengaged/ceased support and are either unemployed or their whereabouts is unknown.

The 22/23 PESF funding allocation from the Scottish Government allowed for the recruitment of an additional Engagement Worker. Unfortunately we were unsuccessful in recruiting a suitable applicant. On approval from the Procurement Team one of our Third Sector Partners Inspiralba is now also delivering PESF support to eligible parents. From December 2022 to March 2023 45 parents commenced support.

<http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/jobs-and-training/helping-people-work>

The main challenge identified in moving parents into employment has been lack of childcare, in particular childcare for children with disabilities and wraparound to accommodate school holidays.

Case Study 1 - Employability Team

Who – tell us about the participant (age, area, etc. - names can be changed) Line of delivery Participants employability aim	AE is a 47 year old single parent of 2 teenage boys who had recently separated from her husband. AE had a history of alcohol misuse which she successfully overcame due to her determination to provide a better future for her sons. She worked part time but was struggling to pay her bills. AE's dream was to become an HGV driver
Barriers Identified	At referral AE presented as low income employed and her previous alcohol left her experiencing a long term health condition. Due to AE's low household income she couldn't afford to pay for her much desired HGV Course. She had previously taken out a loan for the medical and theory part of the course but was unable to pay the £1,500 for the HGV lessons and test fee.
Impact – how has the participant changed or moved forward that would not have been the case without the support. What support has the participant received? (Training/learning participation etc.)	Through the PESF funding, the motivational and mental health support and help searching for employment opportunities from her PESF worker, AE passed her test and has now secured full time employment with a Haulage company in Aberdeen
What outcomes has the participant achieved (including soft skills, any milestones, qualifications etc.)?	AE has achieved her HGV Cat C license. She has gained confidence, has greater self-esteem and is feeling positive about the future.
Has there been any partnership working in order to help the participant e.g. CAB, Business Gateway, health visitors, counselling, external organisations etc. (list is not exhaustive)	AE's PESF worker liaised with other members from the ABC Employability Team regarding Haulage employment opportunities. She also worked in partnership with a training centre in Glasgow which could provide the necessary training required for participant.
Quote from participant – their views on the support offered and outcome achieved?	"I just wanted to send a wee quick message to you to thank you for helping me. I cried when I came off the phone to you. I've been trying so long for this and was desperate to get a break and I'm actually now feeling so positive about the future" "Just to let you know I passed my HGV driving test this afternoon!!It still feels like a dream. I'm still in shock. Just wanted to say thanks so much for what you did. I couldn't have done this without you. I've finished reading the book you recommended so it's onwards and upwards for me now!"

Case Study 2 - Employability Team

Who – tell us about the participant (age, area, etc. - names can be changed) Line of delivery Participants employability aim	B is a 32 year old Syrian refugee living in Argyll and Bute. He lives with his wife and 2 children. B has a job working nightshift in a factory on minimum wage. In the near future, when his English improves, B hopes to do a course in computer programming and his dream is to start up his own business
Barriers Identified	Language barrier Transport – no public transport at night meaning he has a long walk to and from work No access to a digital device
Impact – how has the participant changed or moved forward that would not have been the case without the support. What support has the participant received? (Training/learning participation etc.)	Funding from PESF meant that B could be provided with a bike, helmet and lights, meaning that he could work extra hours and increase his monthly wage. Due to the timings B was unable to attend the ESOL classes available from Community Learning. His PESF worker was able to provide a laptop and enrol B in an online ESOL course which he is able to do on his days off. B has a long term plan and with support from his PESF worker, continued progress with his ESOL course and partnership working with Business Gateway, his dream could become a reality.
What outcomes has the participant achieved (including soft skills, any milestones, qualifications etc.)?	B has increased his monthly wage thus increasing his household income and passed his first Beginners English Skills test.
Has there been any partnership working in order to help the participant e.g. CAB, Business Gateway, health visitors, counselling, external organisations etc. (list is not exhaustive)	Partnership working with Argyll and Bute Refugee Support Worker and Live Argyll's Community Learning Team.
Quote from participant – their views on the support offered and outcome achieved?	"My family and I have received a lot of support since coming to Scotland. I received a bike and a laptop which has helped me work more hours and I am able to study in my free time. I hope to start up my own business in the future. The continued support I receive from my PESF worker is very much appreciated"

Fair Start Scotland (FSS)

Fair Start Scotland support is provided face to face or remotely to allow participants the choice of what works best for them.

Over the last 12 months 80 new participants commenced individually tailored provision FSS, 19 of which are parents of dependent children. Keyworkers supported these participants as well as existing case-loads and successfully moved a total of 37 into employment across a number of sectors. In work support is offered to allow continuation of support whilst in employment.

As this is a voluntary service the challenge continues to be competition from other provision such as DWP support, PESF, NOLB and the YPG.

The Young Person's Guarantee (YPG)

The YPG has been well received in particular Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs). A total of 79 young people have commenced employment with 64 employers due to the funding available. Of the 34 young people who have reached the end of their funding or decided to end their funded employment; 15 (44%) have been retained in employment with the employer who accessed the subsidy, 6 (18%) are now working with a different employer, 1 (3%) has returned to school, 1 (3%) is at college and 11 (32%) are currently job searching or their whereabouts is unknown.

YPG and NOLB Pre-employment Support

Delivered by Third Sector partner organisations a total of 260 participants (including 42 parents) commenced pre-employment support from April 2022; 104 aged 16 to 24 years and 87 aged 25 plus years. To date 16 have moved into work, 1 self-employment, 11 work experience and 28 Long Term Unemployed paid work placements. These figures are up to 31st December 2022, the next data figures to 31st March 2022 will be available mid-April 2023. This support was funded by the NOLB 2022/23.

These programmes have been extremely successful and it hoped similar will be delivered in 2023/24 subject to the Scottish Government's grant allocation terms and conditions.

Plans Ahead

To continue marketing all employability support to encourage parents to sign up to receive the support which best meets their individual needs.

The Scottish Government will shortly be issuing NOLB All Age Service and Child Poverty Grant Offers Letters to all local authorities in respect of allocations for 2023/24. Pre-employment and low income employment support will be devised in line with funding requirements.

Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership (ABEP) Improvement Action Plan review to be carried out.

The Parental Welfare Fund will be available in 2023/24 to provide financial assistance to parents in the first 3 months of employment.

The Scottish Government has extended Fair Start Scotland by one year to allow referrals to be accepted up to 31st March 2024.

The Employability Team has secured UK Government funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to offer unemployed residents of Argyll and Bute pre-employment support, training and work placements. Training will also be available to those in low income employment who hope to upskill to enable them to apply for higher paid job opportunities. All interventions will be available from April 2023 to March 2025.

Skills Development Scotland / Argyll and Bute

School Service Offer - Our careers advisers work in partnership with every state secondary school in Argyll and Bute, delivering career guidance to enable young people from S1-S6 to develop their Career Management Skills via a range of group work and 1-1 coaching conversations. We work closely with our partners within the school to identify young person who are considered to be most at risk of not making a positive progression from school, helping those young people to develop their career management skills and move onto education, employment or training when they leave school.

From 1 June to 31 December 2022, we delivered 2,082 Career Information, Advice and Guidance engagements for 1,313 school pupils through a mix of group and one-to-one sessions.

For more information, please click on the following link: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/scotlands-careers-services/>

School Leaver Cohort 20/21 - 838 young people left school during the 21/22 school cohort and our team worked hard over the summer months to follow up those who had left to ensure support was offered. The 2022 Annual Participation Measure showed that of the 2,979 16-19 year olds in Argyll & Bute 93.9% were in education, employment or training and personal development.

Post School Service Next Steps – Our service supports young people aged 16 – 18 (extended to 26 for care experienced young people) who are unemployed, helping them to build up their career management skills and move on to and sustain a range of options as appropriate: Training programmes, employability support, education and employment. From 1 April to 31 December 2022 we delivered 465 Career Information, Advice and Guidance engagements for 221 post-school customers through a mix of group and one-to-one sessions.

Post school service: adults & PACE - Working in partnership with a range of partners to support local hubs helping unemployed adults to develop their career management and employability skills and move into employment. In Argyll & Bute our advisers have worked closely with the Employability Partnership (DWP & CLD) to deliver support via our local learning hub format.

PACE: Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) is the Scottish Government's initiative dedicated to responding to redundancy situations. Through providing skills development and employability support, PACE aims to minimise the time individuals affected by redundancy are out of work. PACE brings together 24 organisations, together with the Scottish Government to provide free and impartial advice, guidance and support for individuals affected by redundancy.

PACE support is available to all individuals affected by redundancy.

Advisers have extensive experience of dealing with redundancy situations and can:

Help with CV, job search, applications, and interviews, advise on benefits, staff may be entitled to provide information on learning and training opportunities.

PACE support is delivered using a variety of delivery methods including Face to face, **PACE** Helpline, through webinars and enhanced online resources.

From 1 April to 31 December 2022, we have supported 7 employers and 67 individuals dealing with redundancy.

Visit www.redundancyscotland.co.uk for more information or call 0800 917 8000 to speak to an adviser.

My World of Work - Our website provides trustworthy, expert information and advice and it's free to access for people at any stage in their career. The site is designed to support people of all ages and stages, with activities and tools to help them identify the opportunities open to them. Our school, post school and PACE career coaches have been supporting Argyll and Bute customers by sign posting them to My World of Work for opportunities and developing their career management skills. Parents and schools have been using this service to support pupils with their career journey. Find out more at www.myworldofwork.co.uk

Care Experienced: Our advisers continue to work in close partnership with the Argyll and Bute Council Throughcare/After Care and Social Work teams to work with young people who are care experienced and to ensure our support is delivered at the right time and with the relevant support from other key workers supporting the young person.



Summary of Learning HUBS

The Learning HUBS are being set up in 6 different locations across Argyll with Oban, Campbeltown, Lochgilphead and Rothesay currently in operation with Helensburgh and Dunoon coming on board by late summer. The HUBS are for Adult Learners from age of 16+ (who have left school).

Adult Learning (Community Learning Services) set up and oversee them and have been working in Partnership with other Services to look at how they can collectively provide a holistic and safe space for those members of the community who are wanting to access learning and increase their skills development.

Partners who are regularly or weekly involved alongside the Community Learning worker/s are SDS (Skills Development Scotland) and DWP Job Centre plus (JCP). Which brings added value and additional support.

As the HUBS evolve other Partners will be invited to participate through session slots to raise awareness of their services or to give guidance and support. Within their communities. (This will be different to each local area). For example:

Housing, HCSP, Argyll College

Learner can access the HUBS for support in: Life Skills for Work and Personal Development

Basic Digital skills

Employability support

Accredited Learning Opportunities

Study Skills

Information and sign posting to services and other organisations

Basic financial capability including budgeting

Learners new to social media and Internet (how to use it to keep in touch with family/friends), online shopping, Banking, paying bills etc.

Numbers of learners attending the HUBS are slowly increasing as Adult Learners start to return to "life after lockdown"

Attendance: weekly average numbers mixture of regular attenders and Drop In/ attenders (may only attend once or twice) January 2022 – June 2022 (present)

Learning HUBS	Number of participants
Lochgilphead	13
Oban	3
Rothesay	6
Campbeltown	8
Helensburgh	0
Dunoon	0
Area wide total across all areas combined	On average 30 people per week numbers slowly growing

Council Apprenticeships

Since April 2022, we have employed 5 new modern apprentices. This brings the total number of apprentices employed since 2014 to 75. Overall, we still have a high rate of apprentices going onto secure employment with Argyll and Bute Council on completion with 73% of all apprentices completed securing a job with the council. As our apprenticeship vacancies are offered based on workforce need determined through our workforce planning process, we are hopeful this rate will remain high.

We have also continued to offer our foundation apprenticeship in social services children and young people across schools within Argyll and Bute. The foundation apprenticeship offers the opportunity for a school pupil to gain work experience and a vocational qualification whilst in school. They gain a qualification which is equivalent to a Higher and at the same time get to experience a work placement which provides them with key experience, skills and knowledge. This is not only a brilliant addition to a school leavers CV, but it allows Argyll and Bute Council to grow a quality Early Years workforce for the future. Argyll and Bute Council continues to work closely with schools to facilitate work placements for young people where possible and has established links with DYW Argyll to offer opportunities for young people in the local area where it is possible to do so.

Education 2022-2023

Schools have been able to provide renewed consistency for learners since spring 2021. Whilst Covid19 has continued to place additional pressures on staffing and attendance at schools, school communities have enjoyed the return to face to face teaching. All education establishments continued to have contingency plans in place for any return to remote learning and effective communication with parents/carers from both schools and the Education Authority has been a priority. This has allowed schools to respond quickly to changing demands that Covid19 absences placed on our school communities.

Schools have focussed on re-establishing relationships, focussing on the health and well-being of learners alongside literacy and numeracy priorities. Nurture continues to play a vital role in ensuring that our learners the right environment to learn. The Exchange are now providing a counselling service for pupils within schools, again, this is helping to support the wellbeing needs of pupils. A focus on play pedagogy and outdoor learning within primary schools has also been an important focus within school improvement plans.

Assessing learners' progress in literacy, numeracy and other curricular areas, in order that the next steps in learning can be identified, has remained a priority.

CEL data has informed schools of their progress in relation to this and ensured that support and interventions can be coordinated centrally. The PT Recovery and Renewal has continued to work with head teachers within these schools to consider how best to target interventions and, where appropriate, offered training in delivering interventions to ASN and teaching staff. This is central to closing the attainment gap. Additional support and direction has also been put in place to ensure that PEF plans are robust and provide targeted interventions to help close the poverty related attainment gap.

Digital technology such as Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams and SeeSaw has continued to be used to engage pupils and improve communications with parents. Schools have also welcomed parents and partners back into schools to re-engage and involve them in learning. We recognise the importance of parental involvement and engagement in improving outcomes for children and young people. Schools and parent councils are responding to the needs of their community in how they are structuring events and meetings with many parent council meetings continuing to take place virtually as it can help with attendance in particular environments. Connect membership for Parent Councils has also helped support parental involvement and engagement.

The Addressing Non Attendance working group has consulted with all stakeholders to develop work that will help maximise attendance across the local authority.

Schools have continued to support and promote the National Entitlement Card that allows under 22's access to free bus travel. There is scope to improve the uptake of the free bus travel and the Education Department is revising their approach to help address this.

Across secondary schools, the Education Department has been supporting the role of the Mentors In Violence Prevention Programme. A development plan is in place to take the current 3 schools engaged to all secondary schools engaged by 2025. This programme is a mentor based programme that addresses gender based violence. This work is an important part of the Violence Against Women and Girls Project. The work brings together key partners such as Police Scotland and Argyll & Bute Rape Crisis to help support the training and development of mentors and the education of mentees.

In line with UNCRC, We have seen steady progress with Rights Respecting Schools Awards. Since January 2023, 1 school has registered and a further 4 schools have been accredited Bronze. This takes accreditations within Argyll & Bute to 11 registrations, 31 bronze (including 1 partner nursery), 10 silver (including 1 partner nursery) and 4 gold awards. Information has been sent to head teachers to remind them that the award is funded by the Scottish Government until 2025 and that a professional learning event for RRS leads in schools is being developed to support the completion of the action plan that will help schools secure Bronze accreditation.

Education and NHS collaborated to support the return of the drama production tours of "Smoke Free Me" (P6/7) and "You Are Not Alone" (S3). The updated productions included new themes such as vaping. Initial staff evaluations evidence that schools have welcomed the opportunity to re-engage with partners through these productions, that the productions were well received by learners and that this is a useful vehicle for creating discussion around the themes. Evaluative feedback to date demonstrates that staff felt that the productions raised awareness of the support that is available to learners.

Early Years

The Early Years team have continued to upskill our head teachers, setting managers, lead practitioners and practitioners around the use of SIMD profiling data to specifically target input and resources to support the closure of the poverty-related outcome gap.

In addition, within our more rural and remote communities, where SIMD data is less robust, we encourage all staff to use local knowledge, everyday observation and conversations with families and children to ensure that more qualitative data collection methods are valued and used to target resources effectively and equitably to deliver improved outcomes for all.

Within the central EY team, our Excellence and Equity Leads, in particular, have planned for and carried out targeted work with children living in lower bands of SIMD, as directed by their nationally prescribed remit. This work includes supporting individual children with learning to listen inputs to support language acquisition, story-sharing initiatives to build vocabulary and liaising with speech and language colleagues to ensure staff have an understanding of how to support speech development where there may be developmental delay. All of this work is grounded in the use of improvement methodology to ensure that our approaches are evidence-based and leading to the improvements we require to close the outcome gap for specific children.

Our Family Support workers have also been active within our community, attending parent and toddler groups to ensure family learning initiatives around dental health, toilet training, community support initiatives, foodbank access, library sessions, Bookbug sessions and PEEP training sessions are being shared as widely as possible with parents. They are also working closely with Health Visitors to support families to address health and well-being concerns, and gather data around community need to ensure we tailor our future CLPL inputs appropriately. We recently carried out several stay and play/Bookbug sessions within community venues to encourage parents to come along with their child and enjoy a fun-filled session, with no cost implication as part of our Easter holiday offer.

Moving forward, it is part of our work with our Children and Young People's Service plan (CYPSP) to work closely with Health Visitors and Allied Health Professionals to ensure we deliver universal supports to improve infant mental health and wellbeing through building an EY workforce which is trauma informed and trauma responsive in practice; this work sits alongside more targeted interventions in liaison with Argyll & Bute's Infant Mental Health service, to ensure that we are meeting children's needs at all levels whilst also supporting the family unit around the child to support strong attachments which support children to thrive.

Finally, we have committed fiscally this session to support the focus upon early years' environments, both indoors and outdoors, which nurture and support children developmentally whilst providing the space, awe and wonder to encourage play which builds upon their natural curiosity as a learner. This is to ensure that every child has the best start in life and is ready to achieve their potential, irrespective of their social or economic starting point.

UHI Argyll and University of the Highlands and Islands

It had been anticipated that the academic year 2022/23 would return to a more normal mode of delivery for Higher and Further Education courses at Argyll College. All students were given the opportunity to attend their courses from their local learning centres but allowance was made for students to also link in to courses remotely from home. Almost 50% of our full time students in the end opted to study at least some of their classes remotely, several citing cost of travel or caring responsibilities as reasons for this. Whilst there are undoubtedly some convenience and possibly cost saving aspects there are also several drawbacks and these students are generally not achieving as successfully as more engaged students and there is a higher withdrawal rate. Reasons given for withdrawal are feelings of isolation, not feeling engaged with their studies, or students gradually just no longer attending. Without seeing these students so much in person it has also been harder to identify issues with a student's wellbeing early on in the student journey. Argyll College is looking to put measures in place to encourage more in person attendance in the learning centres for the coming academic year. These include more cross course student activities, quicker access to student advisers for learning and pastoral support, enhanced support to apply for all relevant funding. Where necessary the college has continued to provide long term loan of suitable laptops and dongles to allow students to study remotely.

The cost of living crisis has impacted students too. All Argyll College Learning centres now provide access to facilities where students can make hot drinks or heat food. Basic breakfast ingredients, soups and some ready meals are all free and available to our students to take as they need. College discretionary funds have been used to provide additional money to low-income households – young students in receipt of Education Maintenance Allowance currently receive an uplift of £20 per week, students who have a reduced bursary due to Universal Credit entitlement have had two one-off payments in this current year, again to help with the cost of living.

The College Counselling service continues to be well used with an increase in numbers using this service from the previous year. This rise in numbers was not unexpected and the college Counsellor was able to cover this with only a slight increase to waiting times (these still remained at two weeks or less). Students also are encouraged to access Wellbeing Resources managed through Together all and Spectrum Life – two online services subscribed to by UHI.

Other college support services continue to be delivered through a mix of online and face to face. Information that would normally be promoted to students via posters within the learning centres is passed out by email / social media campaigns from time to time, co-ordinated with visits to the online classrooms to give more information. Examples of these would be reminding students of the availability of period products via Hey Girls, where to find information and support for gender based violence etc.

B. Increasing Income through Benefits

Client Gain through Advice Activity:

Once again Advice Services across Argyll and Bute have managed to make a considerable difference in the lives of people who are struggling. The table below shows the client gain from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 for the citizens of Argyll and Bute as **£10,849,000**.

Organisation	2022/2023 (£'000)
Bute Advice Centre	2.249
Argyll and Bute Council Welfare Rights Service	4.324
ACHA Welfare Rights	2.690
Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau	0.875
ALLenergy	0.275
Fyne Homes	0.426
TOTAL	10.839

Flexible Food and Fuel Fund

Launched on 11 January 2021 the Argyll and Bute Flexible Food and Fuel Fund (FFFF) uses funds provided by the Scottish Government to support people with financial insecurities to pay for food and fuel during these tough times.

At the end of March 2023, there has been 1,810 families supported and the combined total client gain is £2.528 million meaning that the average client gain per household is £1,397. In addition the team are managing a debt portfolio of £220,000 across all claimants where they continue to negotiate with creditors to reduce the arrears of individuals and families receiving support.

The project has recently received national acclaim winning the ASSIST Facilities Management Community Focus Award 2022/2023. Looking forward funding has been secured through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and, combined with residual Scottish Government funds this will see the project supported for a further two years to March 2025.

The Welfare Rights Team at Argyll and Bute Council continues to ensure that residents of Argyll and Bute are not missing out on their entitlement to both UK and Scottish Government administered benefits and other related help.

We provide advice to members of the public on claiming benefits. This includes carrying out benefit checks, completion of application forms and providing representation for clients if they wish to challenge a decision. The service has a key focus on maximising income and reducing poverty. Our support is targeted at some of the most vulnerable in our communities and makes a significant contribution to tackling fuel poverty by maximising household income and preventing homelessness.

Two members of our team are funded by MacMillan Cancer Support and they are able to provide an enhanced Welfare Rights Service for people affected by cancer across the area.

In 2023 the Welfare Rights Team will continue to promote the service with partners and community groups across all areas with particular emphasis on the islands and rural locations.

The annual Customer Satisfaction Survey report for 2022/23 has been completed – a total of 114 responses were received:

- 99% of customers would recommend the service
- 99% rated their overall experience of using the service as excellent or good
- 96% said the time taken to respond to their initial enquiry was excellent or good
- 87% of respondents added an additional comment, examples are;

“Fantastic service which we are very lucky to have living in a rural location”

“Much underrated service of great benefit to the community”

“I would not have been able to deal with the process of appealing without their help, exceptional!”

Social Security Scotland

The Scottish Government’s 2nd Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan (Best Start, Bright Futures), backed up by up to £113m extra investment this year, sets out bold action to drive progress on the national mission to tackle child poverty.

The actions set out are projected to drive child poverty in Scotland to the lowest levels in 30 years, with current projections suggesting 60,000 fewer children could live in relative poverty by 2023 compared to 2017 (to 17%, from 24%).

This includes lifting an estimated 50,000 children out of relative poverty in 2023 through the Scottish Child Payment.

The Scottish Government’s package of five family benefits for low income families, administered by Social Security Scotland, is now worth up to a maximum of over £10,000 by the time a family’s first child turns six – and £9,700 for second and subsequent children.

Social Security Scotland is responsible for administering a number of benefits that have been devolved to Scotland.

Currently, Social Security Scotland administers thirteen benefits, eight of which are brand new.

The benefits includes:

- **Carer’s Allowance Supplement** – an extra payment of £245.70 paid twice a year for people in Scotland who get Carer’s Allowance on a particular date.
- **Best Start Grant** - is a package of three payments that will give extra money to families on certain benefits or tax credits during the early years of a child’s life.
 - o **Best Start Grant – Pregnancy and Baby Payment** – one off payment of up to £642.35 from 24 weeks in pregnancy up until a baby turns six months for families who get certain benefits. This goes up to one if you’ve taken over looking after a child, such as if you’ve adopted. You get £642.35 for your first child or £321.20 for any subsequent child.
 - o **Best Start Grant – Early Learning Payment** – one off payment of £267.65 when a child is between two and three years and six months. People can still apply if your child is not taking up a place at nursery
 - o **Best Start Grant – School Age Payment** – one off payment of £267.65 for eligible families around the time a child normally starts Primary 1. People can still apply if they are deferring school entry.

- Best Start Foods – a prepaid card for families to help buy food for children under three or during pregnancy. It replaced the UK Government’s Healthy Start Vouchers in Scotland.
- Funeral Support Payment – a payment available to people in Scotland, who are on certain benefits or tax credits, and need support to meet the costs of a funeral.
- Young Carer Grant - a yearly payment of £326.65 for young carers aged 16 to 18 who live in Scotland and care for people for an average of 16 hours a week or more.
- Job Start Payment - a one off payment of £267.65 for 16 to 24 year olds, or £428.25 if the main carer of any children, who have been out of work and on certain benefits for six months or more to help with the costs of starting a job.
- Child Winter Heating Assistance – a payment of £214.10 to help disabled children and young people and their families with increased heating costs over winter.
- Scottish Child Payment – a benefit unique to Scotland of £100 every four weeks to eligible families and carers to help towards the costs of looking after each child under 16. There are no limits on the number of eligible children supported by the Scottish Child Payment.
- Child Disability Payment - provides support for the extra costs that a disabled child might have, whether mental or physical disabilities. People can apply for Child Disability Payment for a disabled child under 16 however Social Security Scotland will pay Child Disability Payment until the child is 18.
- Adult Disability Payment – is extra money to help people who have a disability or long-term health condition that everyday life.
- Winter Heating Payment - a yearly payment of £50 to help people on low income benefits who might have extra heating needs during the winter.

Social Security Scotland is working in close partnership with organisations across Argyll and Bute to maximise the take-up of these benefits.

The Local Delivery team continue to be very busy helping clients apply and we have increased the number of community venues on offer for clients to choose although home visits remain the most popular choice.

There has been excellent joint working with Education staff to get targeted information out to parents on the increase and change to the Scottish Child Payment and this is reflected in the very positive quarterly increase.

The Argyll and Bute team have been attending the Ukrainian Welcome Fayres across Argyll and Bute to support Ukrainian families to claim our benefits. Information at the Fayres was provided in Ukrainian and Russian to assist with this and Social Security Scotland also has interpretation services to support.

Social Security Scotland statistics: publications - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

Money Counts Level 1 Awareness Raising Sessions

The Money Counts Level 1 awareness session was co-developed by the Highland Money Counts Partnership including the Trussell Trust, NHS Highland, Highland Council and Social Security Scotland, in partnership with the Independent Food Aid Network and Nourish Scotland. This is a short, 45 minute awareness session, delivered remotely through Teams for anyone who may feel less confident and experienced about discussing money worries, but may be in a position to have a brief conversation with individuals and signpost on. This session is targeted at anyone from health, education and social care staff; 3rd sector workers and volunteers; warm place volunteers and anyone who may be able to start a brief conversation about money worries.

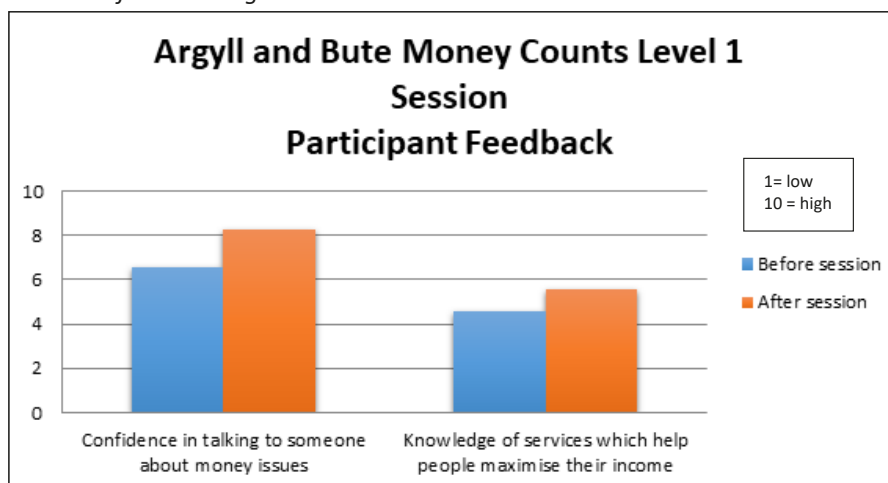
The session aims to:

- Increase understanding of poverty and its impact;
- Increase confidence to ask about money worries;
- Increase knowledge of support services for money matters.

The session helps to promote the Argyll and Bute Worrying about Money leaflet (see item 2 below). Initially, the sessions were delivered separately both in Argyll and Bute and North Highland areas; however, from the beginning of this year the sessions are being delivered together. This gives more sessions available to staff throughout the NHS Highland area. Figures and feedback for Argyll and Bute are being collected separately. Since the sessions have been available to staff throughout Argyll and Bute HSCP, there has been 9 sessions, with a total of 40 attendees with very positive feedback – see chart below.

A chart showing how much people changed their confidence and skills levels because of the training.

Following a slow start with attendance, numbers in Argyll and Bute are picking up and it is hoped that with regular advertising and people who have already attended spreading the word, these numbers will continue to grow for the benefit of communities in Argyll and Bute.



Worrying about money leaflets

The 'Worrying About Money?' cash first referral leaflet is a straightforward resource both for people facing money worries and support workers. The step-by-step guide identifies which local agencies are best placed to help people maximise income and access any existing financial entitlements.

These leaflets are available for many individual local authorities in the UK and this is the link to the Argyll and Bute leaflet.

[Argyll and Bute - Worrying about Money?](#)

www.worryingaboutmoney.co.uk

<https://www.worryingaboutmoney.co.uk/argyll-and-bute>

As well as in English, this leaflet is now available in Gaelic, Ukrainian, Polish and Arabic versions and all are available to download from the website link above. These leaflets have been distributed to a range of health settings and community events, including Chronic Pain workshops.



Community Link Workers

The General Medical Services contract for primary care delivery in Scotland included the roll out of Links Workers as one of six new requirements for Health & Social Care Partnership, to be delivered in partnership with primary care settings. This service is one of a number of activities designed to remove the pressure on GP services by reducing the burden on GP time, freeing them to focus on their role. Community Links Workers (CLW) can take referrals from primary care teams and use a person-centred social prescribing approach to strengthen the link between primary care, other health services, and community resources.

The CLW works with an individual to identify underlying causes and stressors in their life, which are having a negative impact on their health. These causes and stressors are often complex socioeconomic issues which are more appropriately addressed by services other than primary care. The CLW supports individuals to set goals and to navigate barriers to accessing services. The aim is to support people in taking control over their own health and wellbeing, and includes referring them to community services which can support them in doing so. CLWs therefore play a role in addressing poverty, one of the socioeconomic determinants of health.

The CLW service in Argyll and Bute currently delivers support in 13 GP practices, since March 2022. GP practices receiving the service are in the most deprived areas of Argyll and Bute. The successful commissioned service who delivers the programme is We Are With You, a 3rd Sector organisation.

Referrals from GP practices allocated CLW hours have steadily increased since launch. The service is now available in 13 GP practices, with an additional practice due to receive a service shortly following recruitment. The referral process for the Argyll and Bute Service is via the Elemental social prescribing software which integrates with GP practice systems. Outcomes in 2022 - 2023 include:

- 436 referrals received in the first year of the service.
- 92.6% of people who have completed a wellbeing scale at entry and exit have recorded an improvement in their scores, with an average increase of 5.28% in their scores.
- For people being seen for more than 6-8 weeks, Wellbeing Outcome Star measure is used, with 100% of these individuals having increased scores.
- Top reasons for referral were mental health (52%), social isolation (14%), stress (14%), finance (10%), long-term conditions (10%), and housing and essential needs (14%).
- 41 out of 42 people who completed a satisfaction survey strongly agreed/agreed that they had received the right support from the link worker.

www.buteadvice.org.uk/files/ugd/8240ff_be82a1fb63d34014922ff93d0315f12a.pdf

Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships

In 2023, the Scottish Government increased the funding available to develop Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships (WAHPs). This increased funding is being used to test the partnerships in remote and rural areas. WAHP's provide access to money and welfare rights advice in health care settings. This is achieved by embedding welfare advice specialists in healthcare settings through partnership working between local authorities, health boards and GP practices.

Welfare advice specialists provide an effective support service on all matters relating to welfare benefits and entitlements. The overall aim of the service is to ensure that the correct amount of benefit is paid at the correct time and to assist with budgeting skills so that households can pay their bills, heat their homes, and have a better quality of life.

WAHP's provide GP practices with welfare advice specialists who can support patients to improve their financial situation. There is a strong correlation between improving people's financial situation and improved health outcomes so supporting patients around financial issues should:

- ensure people are directed to the right support;
- help reduce demand on practice time through practice staff being able to identify patients who would benefit from financial advice during appointments;
- allow GP appointments to be more focused on medical matters.

This initiative will help to address financial insecurity for individuals who may not seek support from other means of welfare advice and in doing so contribute to improvements in health and reduce demands on Primary Care services.

Funding is being allocated to Argyll and Bute Council for additional resource for welfare advice specialists, for a 2-year pilot. Preparation for these partnerships has taken place between December 2022 and March 2023. The service will start in five GP practices in Argyll and Bute in April 2023. The 5 rural GP surgeries in the Mid-Argyll and Kintyre area that were selected have all now agreed to take part in programme which will start on 1st April 2023.

Cool2talk

Cool2talk supplies free, anonymous, and confidential health information for young people. Cool2Talk reported that during the period 2020–2022, an average of 123 questions were asked per year. The questions covered a broad range of topics. The most often discussed topics in 2020-2021 were sexual health (26), general health (21) and anxiety (15). 45% of the total questions asked in the year 2021–2022, were assigned to the emotional health topic. In addition, there were 37 questions assigned to the relationships topic; this may have been due to the impact of COVID-19 and lockdowns on young people's mental wellbeing and their friendships.

From 2020-2023 cool2talk received three questions related to work/money worries and the impact this had on emotional health. The young people who asked these questions received a bespoke response. Two of the young people were signposted to Citizens Advice, one was signposted to Argyll and Bute Councils money advice section of their website. All young people were also signposted to Breathing Space or advised to speak to someone they trust such as a school counsellor.

Living Well Networks

There are four Living Well Network (LWN) Coordinators in Argyll and Bute covering eight areas (Bute and Cowal; Helensburgh and Lomond; Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay; Oban, Lorn and The Islands). The purpose of the Networks is to develop local partnership working and planning for health improvement activity.

The LWN's are supported by and help to build capacity for the Public Health Team. They are the link to the community and Third Sector for the PH team. The Networks hold quarterly meetings inviting all their members and in between meetings send out information or newsletters. Each Network creates an annual action plan identifying priorities to focus on. Last year all Networks had speakers at their meetings presenting on child poverty. Presenters included the Poverty Alliance Scotland, Social Security Scotland, ALI-Energy, A&B Children and Families, Bute Advice Centre, Flexible Food Fund etc. In addition, the LWN Coordinators helped to promote the Flexible Food Fund Road shows and one Coordinator created a twelve-page document summarising all the information provided by the speakers to distribute to all LWN members. All Networks promote the Money Worries training and leaflet to all members.

C. Cost of Living Housing

Rent levels

In 2022-2023 the Scottish Government has frozen rents in both the social and private rented sectors. This ensured that rent levels remained constant to protect those low-income families struggling due to the Cost of Living Crisis. As of January 2023, the rent is no longer frozen for Social Rented homes and Private Rented homes rent rises are capped at 3%.

Number of children in housing need in Argyll and Bute

In March 2023, children accounted for 29% of the HOMEArgyll Common Waiting List which equated to 1869 children. Applications from households with children accounted for 30% of all housing applications equating to 974 households. This comprises of households waiting on a social rented home, homeless households, and those already housed in social rented accommodation. This latter group need or want to transfer to another home often because they want or need a different-sized home or a home with specialist provision.

The waiting list demonstrates that 79% of households with children (773) have been assessed as being in housing need and consequently 1537 children have been allocated additional housing points.

The number of households with children under 16 years of age on the homeless and general waiting list, in September 2022 equated to 636 households compared to 633 in March 2023. The number of children on the homeless and general waiting list has declined slightly from 1,180 in September 2022 to 1,168 in March 2023.

Number of households with children and the number of children waiting for a social rented property.

HOME Argyll waiting list	No of households with children under 16	Total No of children
General list	573	1043
Homeless list	60	125
Transfer list	341	701
TOTAL	974	1869

Source: Abritas (Argyll and Bute's Joint Housing Register) March 2023

Affordable Housing Supply

The following actions are being undertaken in Argyll and Bute to increase the supply of affordable housing:

- New Builds - In Argyll and Bute, in 2022-2023, 177 new energy-efficient homes were built due to Argyll and Bute's Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP).
- Community Housing Trusts-Housing Services has established a Community Housing Network to enable Community Housing Trusts to obtain the support they require to deliver affordable housing to their communities. In 2022-2023, 18 affordable homes were built or brought back into use and work on five new build affordable homes on Gigha has commenced.
- Buy Backs-As well as new build homes, the HOMEArgyll Partners have bought some private homes, which they have added to their affordable rented stock to increase the number of properties available to rent at an affordable rate. In 2023-2024 the council and HOMEArgyll partners hope to increase the number of homes they are able to buy back from the private sector through the "Argyll and Bute Buy Back Initiative".
- Short-Term Let Legislation- the Scottish Government considers that introducing the legislation will increase the supply of homes available for local residents. In 2022-2023, applications for Short Term Letting Licences commenced in Argyll and Bute, with the legal obligation to obtain a licence coming into force in 2023-2024.
- Supplying homes in the right places and homes for key workers-
The Argyll and Bute SHIP programme and the Strategic Housing Fund (SHF) have supported the provision of new homes in islands such as:

o	Jura	o	Tiree
o	Islay	o	Mull
o	Colonsay	o	Ulva and
o	Coll	o	Gigha

As well as developments in smaller settlements such as:

- o Inveraray
- o Benderloch
- o North Connel
- o Port Appin and
- o Barcaldine

The Rural Growth Deal will also increase the number of homes available for key workers. Parents having access to high-quality jobs can lift children out of poverty. However, there are several barriers to obtaining high-quality employment in rural areas.

"specific rural barriers [to employment] such as greater distances to employment/childcare providers, limited access to social housing and more expensive transport costs." (Glass, 2020, p7).

Therefore, it is essential to have affordable homes located in places close to employment and childcare to reduce the barriers to employment.

- 16-18-year-olds- When there is a lack of supply of affordable homes, sixteen to eighteen-year-olds who are unable to live at home due to overcrowding or due to the family home not being accessible from their place of employment or training may be forced to stay with friends/ 'sofa surfing'. These insecure and precarious housing arrangements can easily result in homelessness.

Housing vulnerable families who are more likely to be in poverty

The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) recognises that children and families in these households are more likely to experience poverty. Hence, the LHS outlines a series of actions to address disadvantage and alleviate poverty. These include preventing families and young people from becoming homeless.

The percentage of household types who are in relative poverty

Source: Scottish Government Child Poverty Strategy.

- Insecure tenancies in the Private Rented Sector- Many families live in the private rented sector. This sector is often expensive, and tenancies are less secure, with some families living in this sector being pushed into poverty or even homelessness. This is evidenced by the authors of “Affordable Housing Need in Scotland Post 2021”, which stated that the largest proportion of those subjected to formal homelessness assessments in Scotland lived in a private rented properties.

In addition to the homelessness risk, there is a risk that the tenancy will end and that the family will have to move to a new area to find a new home, resulting in children having to move schools. Research suggests that regularly changing schools affect children’s attainment and, therefore, their life chances.

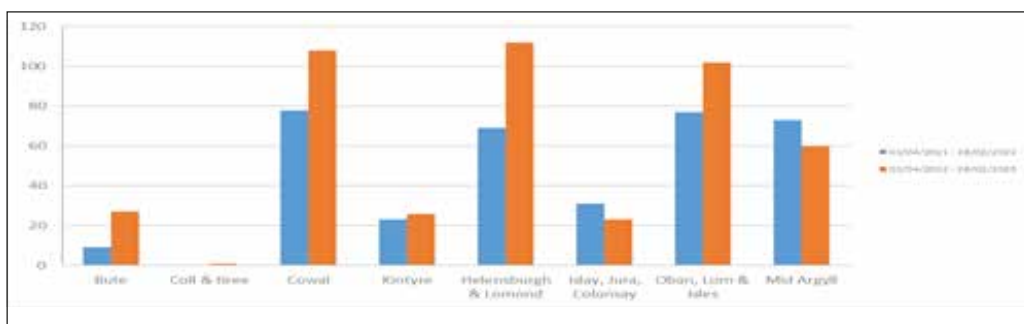
- Homelessness-The housing options service assists families and individual young people aged 16-18 in identifying the type of home they need and can afford. This reduces the number of failed tenancies, thus ensuring more tenants can remain in their homes. This preventative work reduces incidences of homelessness which in turn contributes to reducing child poverty.

There was a significant decline in the number of homeless children in Argyll and Bute from 319 in 2017/18 to 175 in 2021/22. In 2021/22, 374 homeless cases were closed, of which 119 involved households with dependent children (amounting to 196 children) and 87 of these households received a positive outcome.

However, homelessness applications have risen sharply between the 1st of April 2022 and the 28th of February 2023. During that period, 460 homeless applications were made, an increase of 99 applications (27% up) in the same period in the previous year. There are currently 267 statutory homeless households waiting for permanent accommodation, with 60 of these households having children in them. Although there is a rising homelessness trend, the number of children in homeless households has reduced from 175 children in 2021/2022 to 125 in 2022-2023.

Homelessness applications vary by location, with Cowal, Helensburgh and Lomond, and Oban, Lorn and the Isles seeing the highest levels of homeless applications.

The number of homelessness applications in Argyll and Bute by area from 1st April 2022 to 28th March 2023



A chart showing the number of homelessness applications in Argyll and Bute by area from 1st April 2022 to 28th March 2023.

Source: Argyll and Bute Council March 2023.

- Large households- 32% of households with three or more children are in relative poverty. The Local Housing Strategy aims to provide families with access to housing that is the right size to meet their needs. Research shows that children who live in overcrowded housing find it challenging to find a place to do homework and study, negatively impacting their life chances and keeps them trapped in a cycle of poverty.

In March 2023, 150 households on the HOMEArgyll waiting list needed a home with four or more bedrooms. This equates to 15% of households with children requiring a home with four or more bedrooms.

Number of households with children in Argyll and Bute by bedroom size in March 2023

No of households with children under 16	Minimum bedroom size required
3	One bed
505	Two bed
316	Three bed
150	Four+ bed

Source: Abris (Argyll and Bute's Joint Housing Register) March 2023

- Families with a disabled family member- 29% of households with a disabled family member are in relative poverty. In Argyll and Bute, considerable work is undertaken to meet the needs of families with a disabled member. This includes:
 - o In 2022-2023, building 24 new wheelchair homes and 25 homes are suitable for disabled people who do not require a wheelchair spec home.
 - o A full-time Housing Occupational Therapist (OT) has been employed to work within the housing service to ensure needs are met through the design of new-build housing or by adapting existing public and private sector homes. Children and young people with particular needs will benefit from the bespoke person-centred approach provided by the Housing OT.
 - o The number of households seeking advice regarding 'Accommodation Unsuitable – Mobility / Adaptations Issues' has decreased from 82 to 64 in Argyll and Bute from 1st April 2022 to 28th February 2023.

Housing Condition

The housing condition in Argyll and Bute does not compare favourably with the Scottish average. A higher proportion of homes are in poor condition and fail to meet tolerable standards, mainly due to their failure to meet energy efficiency standards. Living in a cold home has been linked to several health conditions. These conditions often result in children missing school, and this has an impact on their life chances. Research suggests a relationship between poor housing and lower educational attainment. Hence, children living in poor housing are more likely to have lower educational attainment, which has a negative impact on children’s life chances.

The Council supports discretionary repair and improvement work to private sector properties via the Private Sector Housing Grant. Housing associations carry out planned cyclical maintenance and improvement works on their stock and deliver necessary adaptations with investment from the Scottish Government.

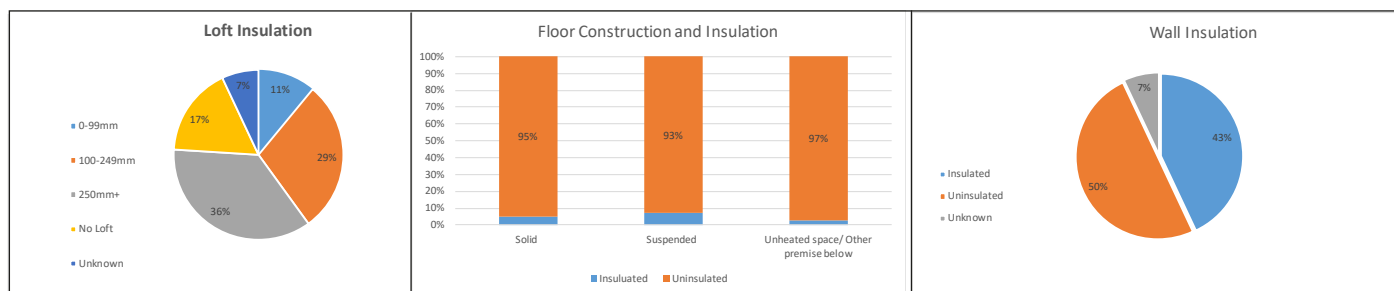
Energy efficiency and affordable warmth

Homes in Argyll and Bute need considerable works to be done to improve insulation measures, as figure * shows only:

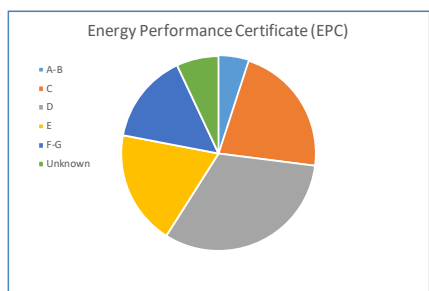
- a third have adequate loft insulation;
- 50% have insulated walls;
- 3-7% have floors insulated

Four charts showing levels of insulation in houses across Argyll and Bute.

Insulation measures in Argyll and Bute homes as of March 2023.



Source: Home Analytics



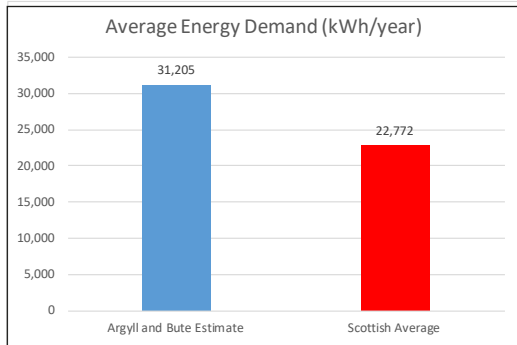
Source: Home Analytics

A similar picture emerges when the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings for Argyll and Bute are assessed. Figure * shows that less than a third of homes are rated EPC band C or higher.

The Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings for homes in Argyll and Bute in March 2023.

Poor housing condition, coupled with homes with poor EPC ratings and low insulation levels, create homes requiring a more significant amount of heat to feel comfortable, as can be seen by figure *.

Average Energy Demand (kWh/year) in Argyll and Bute and Scotland in March 2023.



A chart showing Average Energy Demand (kWh/year) in Argyll and Bute and Scotland in March 2023.

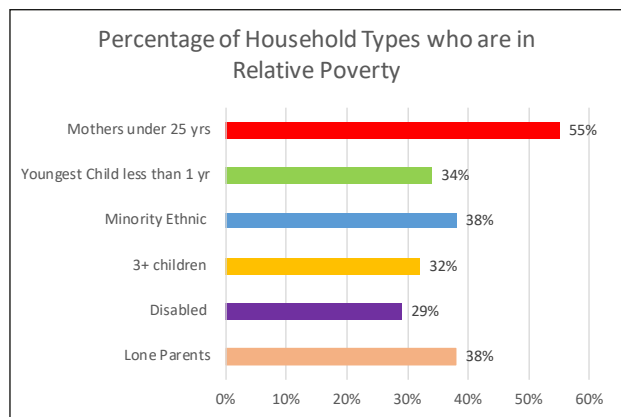
Key:
Argyll and Bute ■

Source: Home Analytics

2022-2023 has been characterised by record high fuel prices adding hundreds and, in some cases, over a thousand pounds to a household’s energy bills. High fuel costs combined with homes in Argyll and Bute requiring more heat to feel comfortable than homes in other parts of Scotland will likely push many families into poverty. Figure * shows that Argyll and Bute has high levels of fuel poverty, with 30% of households in March 2023 being in fuel poverty and 25% in extreme fuel poverty.

The percentage of households in fuel poverty and extreme fuel poverty in Argyll and Bute in March 2023.

A chart showing The percentage of households in fuel poverty and extreme fuel poverty in Argyll and Bute in March 2023



Source: Home Analytics

Improving our understanding of child poverty in rural and island Scotland report states that:

“fuel costs are known to be a particular contributor to fuel-related poverty in rural and island communities (for various reasons, including, on average, larger and older housing stock and more homes that are off-mains gas grid meaning that households are more reliant on expensive oil or electric heating), so interventions for focusing on reducing costs for these households might be particularly helpful. These might include, for example, schemes to improve house insulation to reduce energy bills.”

The LHS outlines a series of actions to reduce energy consumption, such as:

The SHIP Programme- Houses developed through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) are built to the ‘Greener Standards’, which ensure high energy efficiency levels. In this authority, Registered Social Landlords (RSL) pioneered the development of the innovative Passivhaus model of housing at Innellan in Cowal. Another RSL has utilised SHIP funding to finance a new Passivhaus scheme in Garelochhead. These schemes require the home to have a 75% reduction in space heating needs than a typical new build home. Several other energy efficiency measures and initiatives are being developed and piloted within SHIP new builds. From December 2023, homes built through the SHIP programme will have even higher insulation levels than the ‘Greener Standard’ requires. However, new build homes only account for a small portion of the housing stock.

Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES)- To tackle fuel poverty, the Scottish Government has placed a duty on all local authorities to develop a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and delivery plan. The council will publish its LHEES in 2023-24. This strategy and delivery plan will provide a framework to accelerate works to improve the building fabric and ensure there is a plan to reduce the amount of heat required by a home. What this means in practice is that the home will need less energy to reach a comfortable temperature, lowering heating bills and helping to alleviate child poverty.

HEEPS and Warmer Homes- the Home Energy Efficiency Programme Scotland: Area Based Scheme (HEEPS: ABS) is financed by the Scottish Government and managed by the council. This scheme offers residents in Council tax bands A-C properties energy efficiency measures. The scheme is also open to properties in higher council tax bands, which were extremely energy inefficient. Argyll and Bute Council was awarded £2,371,323 for the HEEPS: ABS programme for 2022/23. The current programme runs until 30th June 2023, and all funding is expected to be spent. The programme has spent £930,269 on insulation measures in 163 homes in Argyll and Bute. In 2021-2022, 186 homes received energy efficiency measures investing £1,081,705 into the housing stock.

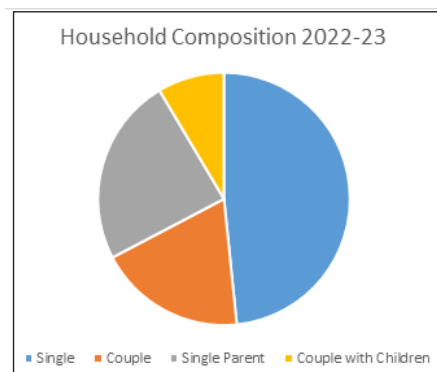
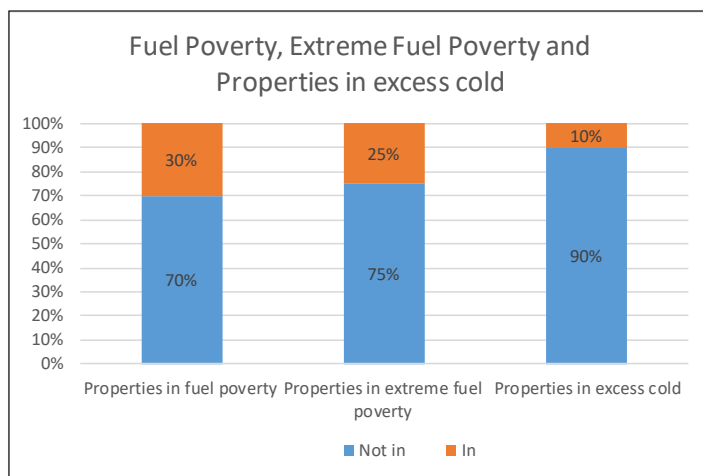
The Scottish Government also awarded £2.2 million to Argyll and Bute in December 2022 to assist the council and Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) in delivering more energy-efficient homes, thus reducing household fuel bills. This project will insulate mixed tenure blocks of properties in Lorn, Tarbert, Bute and Cowal. The funding will also contribute towards an insulation and regeneration project in Ardrishaig.

Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (EESH) - Social housing landlords have been carrying out works in their housing stock to improve their energy efficiency. Most homes owned by social landlords now meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH), with most landlords having over 90% of their stock meeting the standard

Allenergy - Fuel Poverty

Argyll, Lomond and the Islands Energy Agency (Allenergy) continues to provide energy efficiency and affordable warmth advice to households in Fuel Poverty across Argyll and Bute. The majority of our work involves working intensively on a one-to-one basis with clients who come to us either via referrals or by themselves. Clients are first assessed for any immediate crisis interventions required. Crisis grants are accessed subject to availability and eligibility from a variety of sources. Depending on the source, payments could be in the form of prepayment meter vouchers; payments made direct to energy suppliers; cash payments; or provision of essential appliances such as white goods or other items as required. These payments have provided immediate relief and literally enabled people to get out of debt and put their heating back on. The service also helps to increase clients understanding of energy issues, save money on their ongoing costs and improve their resilience to fuel poverty going forward, by providing comprehensive home energy advice offered by telephone and/or through home visits including on energy efficient behaviours, heating systems, appliances, meters, tariffs, bills, dealing with damp and condensation, and ensuring clients receive all energy bill discounts and schemes they are eligible for. The end result is an improvement in household finance, knowledge and understanding, resilience, comfort, health and wellbeing.

Two charts showing percentages of people in fuel poverty and who are in these families



As expected the number of enquiries increased as the colder weather set in. In 2022-23 many households were suffering from fuel poverty due to unaffordable energy prices. This is a particular problem across our large rural area, as mains gas is mostly not available, and other heating methods are usually significantly more expensive. We also have bad weather, poor housing and low incomes, all of which are challenging. We are seeing a larger number of clients than in previous years, and they are often in a worse state of desperation. We are seeing many more clients who simply can't afford to turn their heating on at all. Many are on prepayment meters which they are unable to top up, and they have suffered severely through the cold winter weather. With the end of the Energy Bills Support Scheme, we expect to see households struggle in spring into summer as there is still a need for heating in the West of Scotland. Families are reporting they are worried about the summer school holidays as children will be at home on devices and they will be cooking more.

In 2022-23 a third of the households seeking help with energy had children in the home, a quarter of ALLenergy's clients were single parents.

On average, we calculate the client gains achieved in 2022-23 to be worth an average of at least £500 per client, in a combination of accurately measured crisis intervention funds (~£200) and other estimated savings (~£300). Estimated savings are a combination of factors such as: lower bills as a result of behavioural changes; switching to new energy efficient appliances; changing tariffs or meters; installation of new technologies/gadgets; ensuring all clients receive all discounts and schemes they are eligible for; onward referrals for benefit checks, financial advice, Scottish Government funded insulation or new heating installs.

In 2022-23 ALLenergy's total client gain was over £180,000. ALLenergy's Flexible Fund provided direct energy payments and funds for white goods (fridge-freezer, washing machine, cooker, etc.) to 49 Single Parent Families totalling £16,300; direct energy payments to 94 households experiencing difficulty with energy debt and ongoing costs totalling £31,462; and direct energy payments and funds for white goods to 38 households with a cancer or other life limiting illness totalling £13,250. In March 2023 ALLenergy registered with Children in Need and were successful with 15 applications for households with children averaging £317 per award for white goods and household appliances. ALLenergy works with the Glasspool Trust to provide white goods (fridge-freezer, washing machine, cooker, etc.) and were successful in 2022-23 with 28 applications totalling £8,165. The Fuel Bank Foundation awarded ALLenergy clients 713 vouchers with a total value of £28,268. The Scottish Government funded Home Heating Support Fund awarded 129 ALLenergy clients a total value of £97,694 in direct energy payments and fuel vouchers.

Allenergy continue to work with Argyll & Bute Council, Bute Advice Centre and the Argyll & Bute Community Food Forum to deliver Argyll & Bute Council's Flexible Food & Fuel Fund. Since the launch of the fund in January 2020 the client gain has reached £2.5 million to the end of March 2023.

Free School Meals and Holiday Provision



Free school meals support for entitled pupils has remained a key way of tackling the cost of living challenges for families with children.

All children in receipt of 1140 hours of childcare in early years' settings receive a free school meal, along with free milk and a healthy snack.

Work continues to implement the extension of universal free school meals to all Primary school pupils, with all pupils in P1 – P5 now entitled to a free school meal, and from August 2023 children in P6 and P7 in receipt of the Scottish child payment will also be entitled to a free school meal.

Cash payments in lieu of free school meals for those in receipt on the basis of need have and will continue throughout all future holiday periods, funded by Scottish Government. In Argyll and Bute, the payment made is the equivalent of £3 per pupil per day, paid by BACS transfer.

Pupil feedback continues to be the basis for the development of school lunch menus, and they continue to meet the revised Food and Drink in Schools standards which came into effect in April 2021. The Catering Team appointed a Menu Development Assistant in the autumn of 2022, and one of their key roles is to work with pupils on menu design.

Free school meal uptake remains higher than the Scottish average, and work has been undertaken during 2022/23 to roll out a new cashless catering and online ordering facility, so that every child can access a meal in a non-stigmatising way that protects their identity. Through the new pre-ordering app, each child should also be able to have their preferred meal every day at lunchtime, while enabling conversations with parents around meal choices to become normalised.

The Council's Catering Service continues to hold its Soil Association Food for Life Served Here Award at Bronze level, demonstrating its commitment to providing locally produced, sustainable, ethical and locally prepared food, serving food that's good for pupil's health, for the environment and for the local economy. The Catering Team has also recently won a Health and Vitality Honour for its work around sustainability, and

mapping is underway to identify further opportunities for providing more local food through school meals while supporting community wealth building opportunities for our communities.

Food cost inflation as a result of EU Exit, the pandemic and the war in Ukraine continue to put significant pressure on both public sector food provision and on household finances.

Paid for School Meals

For pupils who currently pay for a school meal, over the past year there has been an increase in school meals debt, as reported by Aberlour Children's Charity, underpinned by research from Heriot Watt University. The Council is applying the recently published Good Practice Principles for households with school meals debt, along with ensuring that discretionary school meals are available for children who need them when circumstances are appropriate.

Good Food Nation and Food Strategy

The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act was passed in July 2022, placing a duty on Local Authorities to create, publish, consult on, deliver and implement Good Food Nation plans, which will help to create a more sustainable and just food system for everyone in Scotland. This plan will need to be reported upon every two years, and reviewed every five years.

The Local Good Food Plan has a number of key areas for inclusion within its scope:

Preparation is underway within the Council and a Project Lead has been appointed to develop and deliver this work. The scope of the Good Food Nation Act is broad, and will draw together a number of other plans, including the Child Poverty Action Plan, with a food lens, along with education, health and wellbeing, and other priority areas.

In addition to the scope of this Act covering child poverty, one of the key principles of the Act is that adequate food is a human right.



It is anticipated that the development of this plan will need to be undertaken during 2023/24, ready for consultation and publication in 2025.

In addition to this, the Scottish Government undertook consultation in December 2021 on the benefit of each Local Authority having a Local Food Strategy, which would cover issues such as growing food locally, and local food procurement. Officers from Argyll and Bute Council are members of the Scottish Government's Steering Group for Local Food Strategies, and are helping to develop the trajectory of this work.

With both of these legal requirements either in place or in development, it is expected that the first ever Argyll and Bute Food and Drink Strategy, with food insecurity, community wealth building and public sector food being key components, will be published during this coming year.

Bute Advice Centre

Bute Advice Centre deliver welfare rights and money advice services to households across the region of Argyll & Bute. The service has never been more in demand, particularly throughout the Covid19 Pandemic and more recently the Cost of Living Crisis. Working closely with partner organisations staff are able to offer the holistic service clients need. Staff maximise the incomes of those with low incomes and ensure disabled individuals have access to financial support. We particularly target our services to the elderly, disabled, single parents and low income households.

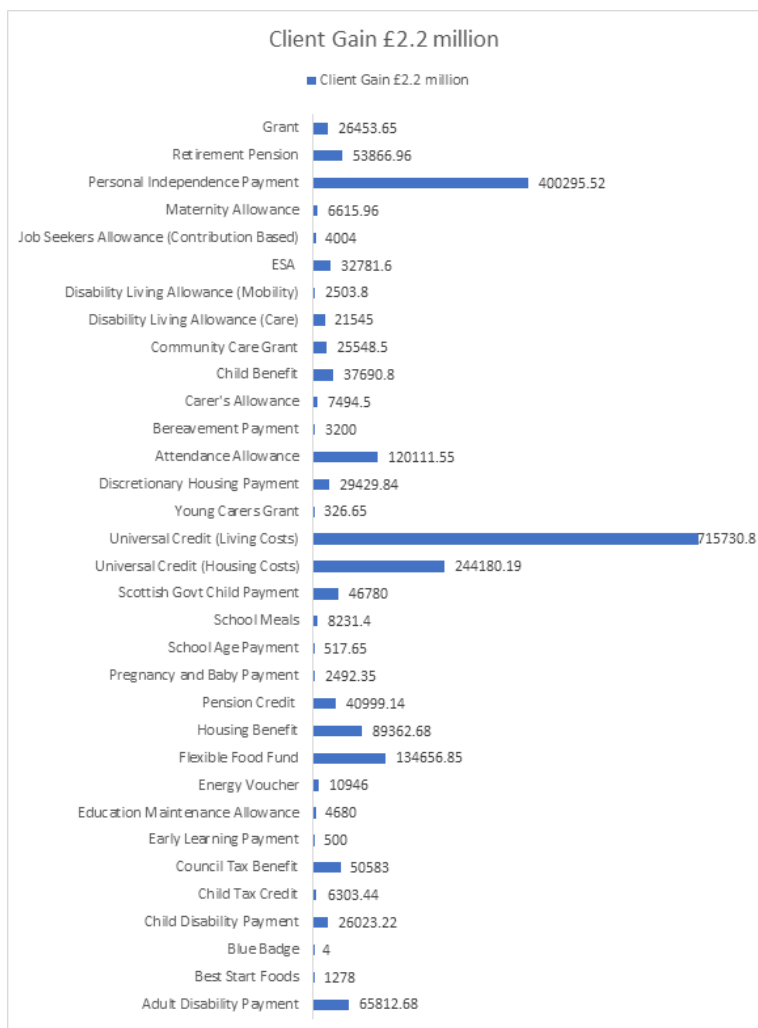
Do You Have Money Worries Book



Over the course of April 2022 to March 2023, 2500 copies of the book “Do You Have Money Worries” have been distributed across Argyll & Bute. The book was co-written by Bute Advice Centre and Allenergy and funded by Argyll & Bute Council. The purpose of the book was to give a brief overview of benefits, budgeting, energy advice, list of foodbanks and helpful advice and guidance. The book can be accessed digitally by logging on to:

[Money, bills and benefits \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](http://money, bills and benefits (argyll-bute.gov.uk)), Bute Advice Centre

Bute Advice Centre Client Gain for April 22-Mar 23 Across All Projects



Bute Advice Centre Projects

Flexible Food & Fuel Fund

The Flexible Food & Fuel Fund project began in January 2021, since then over 1658 cases have been opened. The project was designed to be a cash first approach to mitigate the Cost of Living Crisis facing households across the region. To be eligible applicants must have a low income and no access to savings. Payment is given over two instalments. The first when the applicant successfully applies and the second after engagement with Bute Advice Centre. When engagement is confirmed by Bute Advice Centre, the second payment is usually released 4 weeks after the first payment. The engagement with Bute Advice Centre will help to maximise the client's income through uptake of all grants, rebates and benefits that are appropriate. Money advice is also available. A referral is also made to Allenergy to ensure all energy advice and support can be offered. Thereby supporting the client in a holistic manner.

The rolling client gain over the term of the project is £2,381,461 a combined total figure from both Bute Advice Centre (£1,775,725) and Allenergy (£605,736) client gains.

Funding has been secured to allow the project to continue to support those in communities across Argyll & Bute who need financial help. Payments presently range from £160 for a single person up to £1300 for a couple with 5+ children.

Case Study

Client A is a young single woman, estranged from her father with little support from her mother who has addiction problems. The client had no budgeting skills, spending her benefits as soon as they reached her bank account. Support was given to increase her income and advice on budgeting to ensure that the last week of the month she still had power in her gas and electric meters, food in the cupboard and access to the internet. The client became very low when she was unable to contact friends using her phone, ensuring she had access to her phone for the majority of her socialising was incredibly important for her mental health. The client is now more focused on the future and has set up a course of study.

ACHA Welfare Rights

Bute Advice Centre continue to deliver the welfare rights services to ACHA tenants in the Bute & Cowal region as part of the ACHA welfare rights team. ACHA have been targeting those tenants who could benefit from increased income in terms of grants and benefits, particularly in relation to low income and disabled. The team meet regularly to update tenants through the face-book posts and the brochure shown on the website. Welfare Rights Officers have been providing tenants with Warm Bags, including warm blankets, tins of soup, insulated cups etc. All items that will help individuals who are worried about bills.

Resettlement Programme

Bute Advice Centre continue to support the Syrian community on Bute, offering support when needed with regard to welfare rights and money advice as part of Argyll & Bute Councils package. Additionally, staff support Sudanese and more recently Ukrainian families.

Parental Employment Support Fund

In December 2022, BAC staff began working with Inspiralba and partners delivering specialist welfare rights support to participants of the PESF programme. Helping parents who are unemployed or in low paid or low hour jobs to develop skills, build confidence and reach their potential in accessing employment or furthering their journey on the road to employment.

Argyll & Bute Community Food Forum



In December 2019 Bute Advice Centre was given Council funding to bring the foodbanks of Argyll & Bute together in a forum. The launch of the ABCFF took place in February 2020, just before the pandemic. The forum is an opportunity for the independent foodbanks to share expertise and encouragement. Since January 2021 Bute Advice Centre has worked with ALLenergy in providing a bespoke referral service for recipients of the foodbanks. Representatives from Bute Advice Centre and the Foodbanks regularly meet with Council staff to promote the flow of information between the agencies.

Foodbank	Information
Kintyre Foodbank	Kintyre Food Bank opens Tuesdays and Fridays from 10.30 - 11.30. Operating from Unit 3, Mull of Kintyre Industrial Est, Albyn Rd, Campbeltown. Pressures are rising numbers of those in need with diminishing supplies. The cost of living crisis is having a real impact on household budgeting in Campbeltown.
Bute Oasis	Food bank is open 10-4 each day on Argyll St, Rothesay. Numbers are still rising. The cost of living crisis is impacting on food prices is having a knock on effect on the cost of providing the service. Before price increases the average food spend for the food bank was £1350, this has now risen to £1850 per month. Despite the challenges, the foodbank was able to support rising numbers and provided over 100 households Christmas hampers and the Easter event provided families a fun day out with face painting, painting and decorating boiled eggs, sack races and hundreds of chocolate eggs being given out.
Hope Kitchen	Hope Kitchen in Oban also supports the Mull and Iona food bank. Alongside the foodbank operation it is a Community Hub offering innovative opportunities. Fellowship groups, beach cleans, lunch clubs, Crafting, Green shoots (gardening), Recovery Café for those in recovery from alcohol and drugs, Well Being Café, Music clubs and Quiz nights to name a few.
Tarbert Pantry	A Community Pantry Cupboard offers support to those in the Tarbert area. Supplies are also given to the Multiple Sclerosis support service. Services have been challenging to provide given the building has flooded and required extensive work done. Relocation had to take place in the Church Hall.
Helensburgh & Rosneath Food Bank	The Foodbank continues to see an increase in demand from those finding it difficult to feed themselves or their families during this time when both food and energy costs are increasing significantly, and wages and Benefit Payments remain stagnant. Food insecurity is primarily a result of not having enough income to meet the daily cost of living. During the last quarter from November 2022 until January 2023 we issued 841 x 5-day food bags to those members of our local community who came to the Foodbank in need of food. An increase of 21% compared to the same period last year when we issued 695 food bags. These bags supported the nutritional requirement of 1,162 adults and 576 children, a total of 1,729. There were almost twice as many children affected by food poverty in the quarter to 31/01/23 compared to the same quarter to 31/01/22, with parents requesting food to support 567 children compared to 294 in the previous year. An increase of 92.8%.

Foodbank	Information				
	Table 1: Most recent Quarter Year on Year Comparison				
	Time Period	01/11/22 to 31/01/2023	01/11/21 to 31/01/2022	Number Increase	Percentage Increase
	Food Bags Issued	841	695	146	21%
	Adults Supported	1162	861	301	34.9%
	Children Supported	567	294	273	92.8%
	Total Supported	1729	1155	574	49.7%
	Table 2: : The Full Year on Year comparison for year ending 31st October 2022				
	Time Period	Year Ending 31/10/2022	Year Ending 31/10/2021	Number Increase	Percentage Increase
	Food Bags Issued	2769	2137	632	29.6%
	Adults Supported	3482	2789	693	24.8%
	Children Supported	1423	787	636	80.8%
	Total Supported	4905	3576	1320	27.2%
<p>Table 2 above shows that significantly more families with children required support in 2022 compared to the previous year and that there was an overall increase in attendances and food bags issued of 29.6% year on year. We continue to be very well supported by the local community with many individuals and organizations providing regular donations of food and cash. We currently have a good supply of most food items and a healthy financial reserve to maintain the current service level. Although, we are having to make bulk purchases for low stock items, as well a weekly purchase of fruit, vegetables, eggs and cheese to ensure a well-balanced bag of food. These are purchased from local suppliers and added to the non-perishable food items donated to us. We receive a batch of fresh bread donated by the Gingerbread Man for our Monday and Thursday sessions.</p> <p>We have recently recruited several new volunteers. Although, we remain concerned that if the demand continues to increase our current service model will become over stretched. Physical capacity and relying on a volunteer workforce of mainly retired older people will impose a limit on how much more we can do.</p> <p>We would like to see greater focus on Cash First initiatives with better support for those facing financial difficulties. Faster access to advice and debt management services as well as welfare benefit review to ensure people are receiving their full entitlement to benefits or grants is a better solution than a Foodbank. If people could access money to purchase food rather than relying on charitable food aid this would give them greater dignity and choice.</p>					

Foodbank	Information
Solar Tiree Foodbank	Provision of support through deliveries and food vouchers. Community Store cupboard that can be accessed in the phone box at Scaranish.
Dunoon foodbank	<p>The Dunoon foodbank tries to supply a cafe meal to all their clients who would like one. Formerly these meals were take-away, now they are eat-in at our new social space in Kirk Street, Dunoon (the old Youth Centre).</p> <p>The foodbank consists of two parts - one side aims to provide bags of food to take away for anyone who needs them, the other happens at the same time and consists of a hot meal cooked by our volunteers in our TINY kitchen. All clients can have both if required.</p> <p>On Thursday evening it varies, possibly soup, pie and beans, while Friday morning offers full breakfast or filled rolls, with tea and coffee always available. We also open a warm space on Tuesday afternoon, where you can also play pool or dominoes or knit and natter or learn chess.</p> <p>Full opening hours are Tuesday 1pm - 4pm (tea and coffee only), Thursday 4pm - 6pm, and Friday 0930 - 12mid.</p>
Jeans Bothy Helensburgh	A community hub project awarded “Community Project of the Year 2021” focussing on mental health and well-being offering a vast array of support and interests including mindfulness sessions, beach cleans, gardening, art classes etc., all in a bid to support recipients. As a part of that food parcels can also be issued.
Islay Food Bank	<p>Welfare Boxes are provided to anyone in need. Operates in a similar way to the Trussell Trust. Exact Items vary, but all boxes contain basic, store cupboard items. The box is designed to provide emergency meals for a few days.</p> <p>When you ask for a box we will ask if you require any additional items such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toiletries • Cleaning or Laundry Products • Nappies or Baby Food • Pet Food <p>We are also able to provide a small amount of fresh food such as bread, milk, fruit or vegetables if required.</p>

Free Period Products

Argyll and Bute's free period product initiative, **My Tribe**, officially launched in August 2022. **My Tribe** is the innovative free period product initiative across Argyll and Bute. As a bespoke brand, they have products available in over 150 community locations, with free online ordering & delivery to any household in Argyll & Bute, with plans to reach many more in the area.

In schools they have designed the **My Tribe Champions** initiative, normalising **My Tribe** and period products in our young population. Champions offer peer support to other pupils, help to access products, and provide information.

Community Locations

Working with local businesses, third sector organisations, internal partners and community organisations, each location receives a supply of products, as well as a branding pack to help to display the products and promote the service in their local community.

My Tribe is available in:

- Food Banks
- Primary and Secondary Schools
- Public toilets & Council buildings
- Ports and Harbours
- Gypsy/Traveller sites

Utilising partnership working with MECOPP, **My Tribe** have developed an effective method of provision of period products to our Gypsy/Traveller communities. MECOPP support workers assist residents on sites to access the online ordering system, to place an order for products. This ensures they are able to access reusable products, which are available online only. This was felt to be the most inclusive approach to access.

- Refugee communities

Working with our resettlement teams, **My Tribe** have created translated literature to inform our refugee community on ways to access products. This includes translation into Ukrainian, Russian and Arabic. They also distributed products via the resettlement team to our Ukrainian refugees placed into hotels.

- Gyms/libraries/community centres
- Island Communities/Airports

My Tribe have a provision on 15 of the 23 inhabited islands in Argyll. The remaining 8 islands have a population of <12 inhabitants and may not include menstruating individuals. This provision includes some of the island airports.

- Independent locations

This includes premises like shops, restaurants and post offices in rural and very rural areas. It ensures that as many small, rural locations are encapsulated in their provision. It also includes places like church halls, community groups and community centres and nurseries.

- Women's refuges
- Children's homes
- Oban Mountain Rescue
- Tiree Music Festival

Schools

Following a young person's consultation (aged <18), almost 40% of responders said they were too embarrassed or shy to access the free period products that were on offer at the time (before **My Tribe** was launched). 42% said that having to ask someone for products would be a barrier to access. Due to misuse and vandalism of products, many schools had withdrawn free access in school toilets, and had them in other places, often where young people had to ask for them. It is also a directive of the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 that those who need to access products should not have to ask for them. A resolution was sought to try to tackle these conflicting scenarios and the **My Tribe Champions** initiative was created.

The **My Tribe Champions** initiative normalises **My Tribe** and period products through a peer support program. Champions are identified by the schools and are trained on how to access products/ information. Each Champion is responsible for helping others access products, in school, in their community and online. They also educate people on types of period products available, including the promotion of reusable products, and which products are available from where.

They are tasked with identifying and reporting irresponsible behaviour in relation to period product misuse. We hope this will reduce the instances of these types of problems in schools and the community.

The **My Tribe Champions** initiative promotes leadership and confidence, supporting others, altruism, practicing having difficult conversations, & compassion.

Online Ordering

To ensure those who need to access products can be prepared for periods, **My Tribe** created a website **MyTribe** - Free period products (mytribeargyll.co.uk). The website offers free online ordering & delivery to any household in Argyll & Bute with larger quantities of single use products, such as pads and tampons, as well as the option of reusable pads and menstrual cups. All for free.

All products, including single use products are environmentally friendly, with no plastics, chemicals or toxins and are made from plant based materials such as cotton and bamboo.

Orders are placed, which is then processed via the **My Tribe** team. This is then sent to their suppliers who distribute the orders directly to each household.

The website also has a locations search function to find a local period product location. Potential locations can also get in touch to request to become a stockist.

D. Helping Families in Other Ways

liveArgyll Community Learning

Digital Connectivity for Community Learning and Development (CLD)

The CLD Strategic Partnership, which includes various partners from Public Sector, Third Sector is currently in year two of its four year Strategic Plan. The aim of the partnership is to working together to improve lives across Argyll and Bute by empowering individuals and communities to lead sustainable, fulfilling and happy lives through continuous learning, cooperative problem solving and removing barriers to engagement, health and wellbeing.” One of the areas being focused on is “Digital Skills”.

Extensive feedback from a number of consultations highlights that learners and communities require further support to access digital devices as well as be supported to utilise devices and further develop skills as part of Covid19 recovery. As a result a multi - agency digital skills work stream group has been established to identify need, develop and deliver actions and monitor and evaluate these under the digital skills work stream within the CLD Partnership Plan

A key piece of work which this group has undertaken is to undertake a piece of research, involving an external consultant, to help the partnership understand what Essential Digital Skills support exists and what is needed across Argyll and Bute. The focus of this review was on Digital Skills for Life and Work. These skills are essential to progress towards employment and manage day to day responsibilities. The next phases of the Digital work Stream group, will look at the results of the consultation, and plan to support areas of need.

Youth Participation

Youth Participation continues to be a priority for the Community Learning service. Article 12 of the UNCRC states it is a right that children, as embodied in the Lundy model, have the space to express their views; their voice is enabled; they have an audience for their views; and their views will have influence. liveArgyll has a number of initiatives this year including Youth Action Groups and the Scottish Youth Parliament.

Youth Action Groups (YAG)

Youth Action Groups have continued throughout the last year, and are being supported across six locations over Argyll and Bute.

There are three key aims for these groups:

1. To deliver an informal youth work activity that will support recruitment, engagement and relationship building.
2. To develop youth participation through a programme of personal development and capacity building opportunities for young people.
3. To provide social and recreational activities.

YAG should be a safe space where young people have fun, build relationships and explore issues relevant to them and their communities. They will provide a focal point for the delivery of locality based personal development and capacity building opportunities for young people. They will consult with young people on their interests, needs and how they want to respond to those needs.

To support young people to engage and participate meaningfully we run a training programme twice a year. They will attend a training weekend at an Argyll and Bute Outdoor Centre where the local Members of the Scottish Youth parliament along with Youth workers will provide Youth Participation Training.

Scottish Youth Parliament

liveArgyll supported and mentored Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) throughout the last year. This included carrying out roadshows across Argyll and Bute, attending sittings of the Scottish Youth Parliament across Scotland, and undertaking work on “Welcome to Your Vote Week”. These MSYPs are also engaged in various council and local planning groups, and supported the consultation process for the “Improving lives in Argyll and Bute” survey.

Cost of living Related Activities

Cowal, Bute and Oban ran activities associated with health eating and budget management. In response to the current cost of living crisis, the emphasis of the programme was heavily weighted towards young people understanding the cost of living, and how it impacts them and their families in their day to day lives.

Learning Hubs

In partnership with Skills Development Scotland and the Department of Work and Pensions, liveArgyll have been supporting young people who are transitioning from School into work and further education and wider life through drop in “learning hubs”. These hubs offer young adults (16+) the opportunity to learn new skills, increase employability confidence, and develop life skills.

Maternity

Maternity Services continue to offer as much care close to home as we can to reduce travel for our families. We provide a flexible, family centred service and can see people at home and initial appointments via NearMe have proved successful allowing for more inclusion. Care is co-ordinated by a Primary Midwife, no matter how complex a pregnancy is. There is a universal approach to needs and wellbeing. This includes money matters, welfare rights, benefits, housing, travel, physical and mental health assessments. Information and leaflets are discussed and are available on our Badgernet electronic record. Hard copies are available for the few families who do not access the app.

Baby box info, pregnancy vitamins and statutory Maternity paperwork is issued and discussed routinely by Midwives

The new Perinatal and Infant Mental Health service further supports this model and Maternity has identified Champions to support teams and training around this. We have worked closely with key stakeholders to offer a more joined up service, with parents at the centre of this.

We have developed stronger links with our Consultant Unit in GG&C since the last review. This has had a positive impact on supporting families and streamlining services. Awareness of services we can provide in Argyll and Bute has improved. This allows for earlier discharge and reduced travel and accommodation costs for families.

Local groups and classes are resuming and offered universally this reduces isolation and improves peer support. However, there is still the option for 1:1 sessions and group online sessions which reduces inequalities in the more remote and rural areas.

What is Infant Mental Health?

Mental health starts in infancy, it is a unique critical time of growth and development and babies growing brains are shaped by their experiences. A healthy mind is as important as a healthy body for a baby. Mental Health for infants means having consistent and nurturing relationships with parents or carers; developing the ability to manage emotions; being interested and curious and being able to explore and learn about their world around them. This early period of an infant's life is a key determinant of their future intellectual, social and emotional wellbeing. Good early relationships can provide a 'buffer' which helps to protect infants from other adversities in their life. Most parents want to do what is best for their babies but some live in situations that make this harder. Stress factors such as but not limited to mental health, substance misuse, domestic violence, unresolved trauma and poverty can make it harder for carers to protect, support and promote an infant's development. Almost invariably this calls for complex multi-agency working allowing for support of the parent's problems and anxieties whilst the infant mental health service focuses on the health and development of the infant through their relationships and environment.

What is the Infant Mental Health Service?

The infant Mental Health Service was set up just under one year ago. We are a small service aligned closely with the perinatal service, child health services and the 3rd sector. We will work with infants from birth up to 3rd birthday which will include targeted work with families experiencing early difficulties whose needs cannot be met by universal services alone, and specialist therapeutic work with families experiencing severe, complex and/or enduring difficulties in their early relationships, where babies' emotional wellbeing and development is particularly at risk. The service is made up of a full time permanent Parent-Infant Therapist, covering all Argyll & Bute.

What do we offer?

We will offer a range of evidence-based interventions catering to the need of the infant referred to our service. This includes Video Interactive Guidance (VIG), Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), Watch, Wait and Wonder, Metallization with parent-Infant, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Infant Massage and Circle of Security. A referral may lead to direct work with the parent-infant dyad or lead to sign posting to another service or supporting another service to work with the dyad, or may lead to a professional consultation. We will meet with parents/carers and their infants for an initial appointment to find out how we can support them and their baby. Further sessions will aim to help gain a deeper understanding of family dynamics and how they care for their infant's emotional needs and discover new ways of thinking about their infant and their relationship. We can visit families at home or somewhere convenient, such as a local health centre. We will use our expertise to help the local workforce to understand and support all parent-infant relationships, to identify issues where they occur and offer the appropriate support.

How to contact us

Email: nhsh.abimh@nhs.scot

Tel: 07977140752

Consultation with LGBTQ+ young people

The Educational Psychology Service has launched a consultation survey to gather the views of young people who identify as LGBTQ+ and explore their perception of mental health support services and how support could be improved. The results and recommendations of this research will be shared with schools across Argyll and Bute and with the wider education community to raise awareness of the successes and challenges raised. It is hoped that this research will help make schools a more positive, safe, and inclusive place for all pupils to learn.

Working with Refugees in Argyll and Bute

The Council's Resettlement Team works in partnership with other organisations through the Refugee Programme. Work began in 2015 and began with Syrian resettlement, a UK wide scheme whereby local authorities provided accommodation and support. In Argyll and Bute Syrian families and individuals were found homes on the island of Bute and organisations worked together to provide multi-agency, person centred support. This programme continues today and now includes other nationalities; it has proven highly successful, winning a number of awards, including COSLA Excellence Awards and is seen as a benchmark settlement programme.

Work with Ukrainian families is different as it is community based but still resettlement led. Support remains multi-agency and person centred. Some 300 Ukrainian citizens have been welcomed to Argyll and Bute under two different schemes. With the "Homes for Ukrainians" UK Government backed scheme people match with a sponsor in the UK; it is the task of the local authority to complete checks on the prospective sponsors.

The second scheme for Ukrainian people was set up by the Scottish Government and will provide places for up to 45,000 people. They are placed in hotels across Scotland and local authorities match them with sponsors from there. Challenges may arise in the future with the need to identify longer term accommodation for everyone. To date this has been successfully managed in Argyll and Bute and no one has been identified as statutorily homeless. The Council's Resettlement Team has been scaled up to provide support for Ukrainians and this has included:

- Housing;
- Interpreters;
- English Lessons;
- Employability support;
- Benefits and Grants;
- Physical and mental health supports and counselling.

Outcomes for people placed across Argyll and Bute are good and provision provided is a notable example of effective multi-agency partnership working.

What are Carers Centres and MAYDS doing to support Young Carers in Argyll & Bute?

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 requires Argyll and Bute HSCP to provide all young carers with a Young Carers Statement and support tailored to their specific needs. To meet the requirements of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and to support our young carers in Argyll and Bute, we have taken steps to promote awareness of young carers in Argyll and Bute including development of an app to support the completion of young carers' statements.

Awareness sessions and information have been shared with all stakeholders including children and young people to raise awareness of young carers, in addition a poster has been created aimed at identifying young carers to encourage them to access support. To improve awareness and support, processes have been implemented within education to ensure young carers can be recorded on SEEMIS.

Throughout this development we continue to ensure that Young Carers voices are heard and are continued to be listened too as we move forward with youth participation. Argyll & Bute HSCP has excellent relationships with the Carers Centres who are contracted to carry out responsibilities of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 Young Carers Statements.

Transforming Responses to Violence against Women and Girls

In 2021 the Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership was successful in gaining a grant of £68,852.40 from the Developing Equally Safe Fund for a project called: Transforming Responses to Violence against Women and Girls. This two year project is focused on rolling out the Safe and Together Model across Argyll and Bute. This model aims to ensure that more children remain safe and together with the non-offending partner in cases of domestic abuse. It also places a focus on the perpetrators to take responsibility for their actions and impact on their children. The project also involves a number of other training elements aimed at giving workers the skills and knowledge they need to better deal with domestic abuse and other forms of gender informed violence. Research is also being carried out looking at the views of staff, survivors of domestic abuse and perpetrators. In the period 2022 – 2023 the outcomes for the project were as follows:

- 25 Children and Families Social Workers commenced their Safe and Together Core Training;
- 15 Managers and Supervisors from Social Work, commenced their Safe and Together Core Training and Management Training;
- 22 other training courses were delivered to staff (MARAC, DASH, Awareness Raising, Routine Enquiry, Police Dealing with Domestic Abuse, Harmful Traditional Practices, and Dealing with Disclosure of Sexual Assault). Number of attendees at these courses was 392.
- Research was completed with staff and survivors of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is a driver of child poverty and the work of this project should lead to earlier and more effective intervention and better outcomes for children and survivors.

E. Other Planned Work

Rural Growth Deal

Tourism – Creating a World Class Visitor Destination - proposal is to open up access to Argyll’s coasts and waters to develop Argyll as a West of Scotland “must visit” location for the maritime leisure market. Proposals will also build on a phased process of regeneration in some of our key coastal towns and we are working closely with local communities to maximise opportunities for inclusion and well-being. This includes working to deliver enhanced marine training opportunities for local school children.

Creating a Low Carbon Economy – Explore options for the decarbonisation of Islay with a focus on improving energy efficiency of domestic properties. The Council and strategic partners are working to develop a bespoke and innovative scheme that will address island issues and deliver a just transition towards a net zero and climate resilient island economy in a way that delivers fairness and tackles inequality. Local green skills and supply chain opportunities will also be a central pillar of this project.

Rural Skills Accelerator Programme - Inclusive Growth lies at the heart of City Region and Growth Deals and this Deal will drive future inclusive economic growth and tackle inequality with a strong focus on community wealth building, STEM skills, rural enterprise and the delivery of local education services. The Rural Skills Accelerator Programme is a vehicle that will provide the 21st century infrastructure and delivery mechanisms needed for skills, training, education and enterprise to facilitate collaborative growth in the rural economy.

Housing to Attract Economic Growth - The housing element of the Rural Growth Deal proposes to provide affordable housing of the right type and in the right place to support growing business sectors.

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Clyde Engineering and Innovation Cluster - Through the Rural Growth Deal Argyll and Bute Council is seeking to maximise the local and national benefits of the Ministry of Defence £1.3bn Maritime Change Programme. The focus is on providing bespoke commercial and businesses accommodation proximate to the base as well as enhanced innovation and skills infrastructure.

West Coast UAV Logistics & Training Hub - This intervention involves working in partnership with industry leading research institutions to create an innovative research and development centre for unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technologies on the west coast of Scotland. This will create the West Coast of Scotland’s first dedicated drone training centre with indoor facilities specialising in developmental, test and operational facility for UAV technologies. This facility could enhance the provision of services to local island communities following on from successful pilots working with NHS Highland and the Royal Mail. Another potential use being considered is delivery of school meals to remote and island schools.

Marine Aquaculture Programme – This is a programme of projects aimed at making Argyll and Bute the leading region for innovation in marine aquaculture in Scotland, UK and globally, by underpinning sustainable, inclusive business growth through investment in world-class marine science and technology.

We are still working towards signing the Full Deal Agreement for the Rural Growth Deal and it is hoped to achieve this key milestone later in 2023. Given that the RGD is not yet in the delivery stages, the impact on child poverty and well-being to date has been limited however, moving forward it is anticipated that the Rural Growth Deal can be a key driver for local inclusive economic growth, community wealth building and well-being. The Deal can also help support a just transition to net zero within the region.

A key focus of the Creating a Low Carbon Economy project is helping to reduce high levels of rural fuel poverty. This is likely to include improved energy efficiency measures in local housing stock to try and reduce energy consumption / costs. The RGD funding will also seek to provide additionally to existing energy efficiency schemes to maximise the funding available.

The RGD housing project is focused on providing affordable housing with a mix of tenures required to support local people and workers in some of our most rural communities. Housing will also be constructed to be as efficient as possible to reduce energy costs and we aim to ensure that potential sites are located close to local amenities to reduce the requirement for travel.

Digital inclusion is a key driver behind our RGD digital project. We will look to enhance digital connectivity across the region and facilities such as the STEM hubs may also include community spaces which will be fully digitally connected. We are investigating the potential to utilise fibre and 5G connectivity to provide immersive, interactive learning environments for local school children. We will also try and maximise community benefits from any digital investment via the RGD.

The Rural Skills Accelerator Programme includes a focus on providing enhanced STEM education for local school children which will be delivered via a series of physical STEM hubs and associated outreach activity to ensure all local schools can benefit from this.

A key focus of the wider RGD programme will also be growing local skills, training and job opportunities in growth sectors such as the blue economy, defence and tourism. We will invest in key infrastructure such as a new Marine Industry Training Facility at Dunstaffnage, commercial and innovation space serving the expansion of HMNB Clyde, enhancing UHI Argyll College's estate in Dunoon and a series of STEM Hubs across the region. This will provide enhanced opportunities for people to train or study locally helping to attract and retain economically active individuals that are required to support growth in key local employment sectors.

We will also be undertaking a series of marine tourism and place based regeneration projects that should enhance infrastructure in a number of our key coastal towns and villages. This will include measures to improve civic pride by providing enhanced community spaces, new active travel links and associated employment opportunities (e.g. linked to growth in tourism, construction, apprentices etc.). The Council are also working to deliver an enhanced water sports training facility in Campbeltown, which will expand opportunities for local school children and adults to marine training and leisure activities. Campbeltown Grammar School has been a key collaborator with this project in recent years, and delivering the new facility will better enable Kintyre Sea Sports to grow the well-established partnership with Campbeltown Grammar School thereby expanding maritime training opportunities to more school pupils.

Useful Source Reading

UK Poverty 2023: The Essential Guide to Understanding Poverty in the UK; Joseph Rowntree Foundation; 26th January 2023

Life at Age 14: initial findings from the growing up in Scotland study; Children, Education and Skills; Social Research

Child Poverty in Scotland: health impact and health inequalities. NHS Health Scotland, 2018
The Cost of a Child in Scotland 2022 – Update December 2022; Donald Hirsch and Juliet Stone; CPAG Scotland.