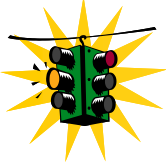




Benefits Highlight Report

Name of Document:	Highlight Report - Benefits Highlight Report	Overall Project Status  GREEN
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Headlines

COST OF LIVING - ENERGY CRISIS

- Customer and Support Services team have produced some excellent work in producing a report on the Cost of Living Crisis for ELT. It highlights the impact of rising inflation on the cost of living and the energy crisis too.
- Food, clothing and travel cost between 13% and 185% more in Argyll and Bute than in urban UK.
- Up to 70% of households in Argyll and Bute at risk of fuel poverty or extreme fuel poverty.
- To avoid fuel poverty a household would need earnings of over £82,000, £44,500 to avoid extreme fuel poverty. Mean average earnings for people in Argyll and Bute is just under £30,000 per annum.
- The price cap announcement by UK Government is for the average household using average consumption, it does not help Argyll and Bute. The cost of heating homes in our area is more than double that of the price cap figure for an average household. Large parts of our area are not on the gas grid and must rely on dual fuel, electricity and/or oil to heat homes, both of which are very expensive.
- What are we doing about it?
 - Lobbying the government
 - Working with partners, DWP Social Security Scotland, Registered Social Landlords, ALI Energy, Advice agencies, developed webpage with advice, FAQs and links to emergency support <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/heat-your-home>
 - Argyll and Bute emergency support through the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund, details below.
 - Administering Scotland Loves Local gift cards to CTR recipients
 - Produced a book of advice information by sector that has been widely distributed and well received.
 - Delivering School uniform Banks across Argyll and Bute.
 - Provision of Anti-Poverty training.

ARGYLL AND BUTE FLEXIBLE FOOD AND FUEL FUND (FFFF)

- As at 31 August 22 the project, has supported 1,350 households who are suffering from food and fuel insecurities in Argyll and Bute, with a combined client gain of £1,865,970 which is an average gain of £1,383 per household. The project has been extended for another year to continue the valuable work they



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do in supporting our most vulnerable households and we have made a bid to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for a further two years support to keep the project going till at least 2025.

- The biggest support has been in disability related benefits PIP/DLA that have gone unclaimed. With UC, HB, DHP and Scottish Government Grants making up a significant amount. Everyone seen by an Adviser at BAC is offered a referral to Alienergy. They have supported clients in Debt Relief, Fuel Vouchers, Appliances and Efficiency Measures.

Case Study 1 Family

- *Through the Flexible Food Fund grant last year a family were supported to maximise their income, they have since discovered that their child is disabled and contacted their adviser. The family said that it was only as a result of the relationship built up that they decided to query what the diagnosis could mean as regards their household benefit. Never having heard of Child Disability Payment they were supported by their adviser to access the benefit. As both the wife and child are disabled, the husband is a full-time carer so this extra income is going to make life a little easier going forward with the cost of living increases and higher energy bills.*

POVERTY TRAINING

- Poverty Awareness Training was delivered by the Poverty Alliance staff across the Council and its community planning partners. Participants described the course as informative, thought provoking, eye-opening and enlightening. One more session will be delivered to elected members on 30 November 2022
- An online Poverty Awareness Training Module is now be available. The link to the training will be circulated to partner organisations shortly.

SCHOOL CLOTHING BANKS

- Before the end of term Kintyre Recycling Limited (KRL) had done two uplifts from the local schools and received 200 items of clothing. Of these 29 items are unusable. However these are not discarded they are being kept to be sold to a clothing recycling centre with any profits used to keep the project going.
- Since the start of the new term KRL have been doing regular uplifts from the schools there have been some donations.
- We have developed an order form using Microsoft Forms and are just ironing out some online security issues before it is circulated. This will allow parents to access the service easily, place their order and collect it from the KRL office in Hazelburn Business Park.
- We are also finalising the promotion of the Clothing Bank via social media, website etc.
- Campbeltown Grammar are going to have a shop within the school for recycled goods including uniforms. This is part of a project to teach pupil entrepreneurial and business skills and is part of model being used in Bute and Dunoon. This will also give pupils choice in where they collect clothing.
- Next steps are to advance in our other areas. In Oban the Baptist Church have provided preloved uniforms to 60 families. They have a room within the Church house which can be used for storage and collection and we are going to work with them and Oban High School/Primary Schools to set up a proper system for collections from schools, promotion etc.



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- I have also had initial meetings with Dunoon and Rothesay schools to progress this project. They held summer swap shops for uniforms and a meeting will be arranged after they have held parent council AGM's probably after October Holidays.
- And I have contacted the Head Teachers in Tarbert and Lochgilphead to progress this in their area.
- Following that we will be focussing on the Islands to set up Clothing Banks on Islay, Mull, Tiree etc.
- We hope to have the project complete by end of the current school year.

CRISIS GRANTS

- In the period 1 April 2022 to 31 August 2022 there was 591 applications received in SWF for Crisis Grant support. 315 awards have been made to the value of £29,065. This is a slight increase in applications for the same period last year and a 15% increase in spend.

COMMUNITY CARE GRANTS

- In the period 1 April 2022 to 31 August 2022 there was 369 applications for Community Care Grants. With 157 awards made to the value of £173,450. For the same period last year we had received 400 applications and the value of awards was £255,172 so there has been a significant decrease in this type of support. However, at the end of August there were 56 CCG's outstanding.
- Scottish Government have advised that the Council will receive £458,338 of funding for SWF in 2022/2023

DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS (DHP)

- As at 31st August 2022 our spent and committed amount on the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) fund is £465,015.
- Initial DHP funding allocation for 2022/23 in Argyll and Bute is £961,012. Scottish Government has announced funding of £853,827 for bedroom tax and £107,185 relating to other DHP's.

SELF ISOLATION SUPPORT GRANTS

- Self-Isolation Support Grants of £225 (previously £500) are being administered by the Scottish Welfare Fund team. From 01 April 2022 to 31 August 2022 the Council received 294 applications for support with 129 awards made to the value of £48,675.
- The Scheme is currently ongoing until 31 October 2022.

Current Initiatives/developments (in your area and across partners)

ID	Description	Action / Progress /Timeline
1	School Clothing Banks	Complete by June 2023
2	Poverty Awareness Training	Completed March 2022

Horizon scanning (e.g. future legislative changes / opportunities or developments)

- None

Key actions – 3 month horizon

- Continue to monitor progress with AB FFF and other schemes.



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- Monitor DHP and CCG spend against budget.
- Continue progressing our School Clothing Banks project, urgently touch base with the Islands. .

FERGUS WALKER

23 SEPTEMBER 2022