

WELFARE RIGHTS TEAM PLAN V0.1

1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

Background, context and overall purpose of the Welfare Rights Service

Argyll & Bute Council have provided a Welfare Rights service to local clients since 1996, when the duty to provide the service transferred to the new unitary Scottish Local Authorities.

The welfare rights section supports the implementation of the Local Housing Strategy through the provision of welfare rights advice to support people to live independently and prevent homelessness. The service has a key focus on maximising income and reducing poverty.

The service is available to clients resident in Argyll & Bute who may be entitled to receive both UK and devolved benefits. There is a Welfare Rights Officer located in each of the main towns. The Welfare Rights service is available throughout the whole of Argyll & Bute.

The service aims to provide Type II & III Welfare Rights advice directly to clients and to refer Type I Welfare Rights clients to ABCAB and other local agencies under our contract or agreement with those organisations.

The service aim is to ensure that clients are in receipt of all benefits that they are entitled to & to maximise household income.

The Welfare Rights Service

The welfare rights service supports the implementation of the Local Housing Strategy through the provision of welfare rights advice to support people to live independently and prevent homelessness.

The Welfare Rights Team aims to ensure that the 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 benefit, including carrying out benefit checks and helping to complete application forms. We can also provide representation for clients if they wish to challenge a decision, we will assess the merits of the client's case and provide representation at tribunal if they have a case.

Some 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.

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.

Contact Details

Address: Welfare Rights Service
Trading Standards and Advice Services
Kilmory
PA31 8RT

Phone: 01546 605517

Email: welfare.rights@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Number of sites advice service operates from

There are four sites across Argyll and Bute:

1. The Civic Centre, Helensburgh, G84
2. 1A Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD
3. The Burnet Buildings, Campbeltown, PA28 6BJ
4. Municipal Buildings, Oban, PA34 4AW

Number of Welfare Rights Advisors

There are currently 10 Welfare Rights posts filled:

- 1 Senior Welfare Rights Officer – 35 hours
- 4 Welfare Rights Officers – 25 hours
- 3 Welfare Rights Assistants – two at 35 hours and one at 28 hours
- 2 MacMillan Welfare Rights Assistants – two at 17.5 hours

Hours of Operation

9am – 5pm Monday to Friday

Staff are available flexibly between 9am & 5pm Monday to Friday.

If an appointment is required out with the above times, it can be arranged on a case-by-case basis to suit the client's needs where possible

Method of Delivery

Advice and support is now provided by various channels as appropriate and agreed with the client. These include options such as office based, surgeries, drop in's home visits, telephone enquiries, and video

If an office appointment is required it would normally be in one of the main council offices or occasionally at an outreach location.

Targets

CODE	TASK	ASSIGNED TO	DUE BY	STATUS	Revised target
TP-1	Implement the Local Housing Strategy through the provision of welfare rights advice.	WR Team	31 March 2026	Green	N/A
TP-2	Tribunal Representation	WR Team	31 March 2026	Green	N/A
TP-3	Performance Management	WR Team	31 March 2026	Green	N/A
TP-4	Support to Council Staff/ Health and Social Care Partnership	WR Team	31 March 2026	Green	N/A
TP-5	Promote Partnership Working	WR Team	31 March 2026	Green	N/A
TP-6	Staff Training and Development	WR Team	31 March 2026	Green	N/A
TP- 7	Service Planning	WR Team	31 March 2026	Green	N/A

Team Plan: Detail**TP-1 Implement the Local Housing Strategy through the provision of welfare rights advice****Led by:** S. Tuite

Code	Task/Milestones	Period/Due By	Status	Outstanding Actions / Comments
1.1	Income maximisation and aim to generate £2.75 million per annum		Green	Highlight report to L&R Management Team – quarterly
1.1.2	Quarter 1	30/06/2026		
1.1.3	Quarter 2	30/09/2026		
1.1.4	Quarter 3	31/12/2026		
1.1.5	Quarter 4	31/03/2026		
1.2	Engage with Local Housing Strategy development for the 2021-2026 plan Income maximization figure – Minimum of £10m generated via Welfare Rights activity by 2026		Green	Provided annual LHS update to Housing May 2025 already exceeded target. Income Max Figure 2021-22 £2,728,847 2022-23 £4,324,342 2023-24 £4,457,792 2024-25 £5,444,069
1.3	Provide advocacy to and negotiate on behalf of clients		Green	Ongoing as part of core work

TP-2 Tribunal Representation**Led by:** S. Tuite

Code	Task/Milestones	Period/Due By	Status	Outstanding Actions / Comments
2.1	Provide representation for appellants at HMCTS and appeals to the Social Security Chamber including attending oral hearings		Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – monthly and quarterly
2.1.1	Quarter 1	30/06/2025		
2.1.2	Quarter 2	30/09/2025		
2.1.3	Quarter 3	31/12/2025		
2.1.4	Quarter 4	31/03/2026		
2.2	Assist with appeals to Upper Tribunal		Green	

TP-3 Performance Management**Led by:** S. Tuite

Code	Task/Milestones	Period/Due By	Status	Outstanding Actions / Comments
3.1	Reports on benefit type, referrals, income generated and demographics		Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – monthly and quarterly
3.2	Quarterly audit - varying % of advisor cases depending on experience and training requirements – monitoring consistency and quality of advice given, case recording.		Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – monthly and quarterly
3.3	Customer Satisfaction Surveys – collated quarterly and annually		Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – monthly and quarterly
3.4	Quarterly report to MacMillan Cancer Support		Green	Ongoing – quarterly MacMillan return
3.1.1	Quarter 1	30/06/2025	Green	
3.1.2	Quarter 2	30/09/2025		
3.1.3	Quarter 3	31/12/2025		
3.1.4	Quarter 4	31/03/2026		
3.5	Annual MacMillan review		Green	To be provided March 2026

Code	Task/Milestones	Period/Due By	Status	Outstanding Actions / Comments
3.6	Welfare Advice in Health Partnerships (WAHP) – NHS Project		Green	Bi-annual reporting to Improvement Service ongoing for 2025/26 Update Report provided to NHS health Improvement lead May 2025 who will share within HSCP Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – monthly and quarterly
3.6.1	1 st 6 months	30/09/2025		
3.6.2	2 nd 6 months	31/03/2026		
3.7	Annual WR Report/statement		Green	2024-25 report produced May 2025 LRS Management Team

TP-4 Support to Council Staff/Health and Social Care Partnership**Led by:** S. Tuite

Code	Task/Milestones	Period/Due By	Status	Outstanding Actions / Comments
4.1	Provide targeted information to staff groups on welfare reform		Green	Ongoing community and partner engagement - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – quarterly and monthly
4.2	Respond to referrals from HSCP staff		Green	Ongoing case work
4.3	Produce a bi-annual Welfare Rights Newsletter		Green	To be produced Spring and Autumn 2025

TP-5 Promote Partnership Working**Led by:** S. Tuite

Code	Task/Milestones	Period/Due By	Status	Outstanding Actions / Comments
5.1	Provide talks and briefings on welfare benefits/reform to community groups		Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – quarterly and monthly.
5.2	Participate in local partnership initiatives and events		Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – quarterly and monthly
5.3	Work with the Ukrainian/Refugee Re-settlement group to ensure refugees are supported to		Green	Ongoing Bi-monthly meetings

Code	Task/Milestones	Period/Due By	Status	Outstanding Actions / Comments
	maximise their income through benefit entitlement.			
5.4	Develop Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships in Argyll and Bute for a 2 year period from April 2023.		Green	Tapered approach to funding agreed due to end 31/03/2026.

TP-6 Staff Training and Development**Led by:** S. Tuite

Code	Task/Milestones	Period/Due By	Status	Outstanding Actions / Comments
6.1	Ensure induction programme completed for all new members of staff		Green	Ongoing as required
6.2	Encourage staff to attend relevant training courses		Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team - quarterly
6.3	<p>Ensure staff delivering the service have the core competencies both generic and job specific to allow them to carry out their role competently.</p> <p>This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job descriptions • Relevant new and refresher training • Shadowing/peer support 		Green	<p>Record of all staff training and hours completed held centrally in shared drive</p> <p>Evidenced through regular auditing of cases.</p> <p>Training Plans completed March 2025 with all staff for 2025-26</p>

Code	Task/Milestones	Period/Due By	Status	Outstanding Actions / Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one to ones • case management procedures • team meetings • Case reviews 			
6.4	Ensure accurate training records are held for each staff member. Annual training plan held for all staff			Central spreadsheet staff responsible for updating own record and keeping evidence that training was completed. ie invite email, diary entry, invoice , meeting minutes
6.5	Carry out quarterly supervision, “Career Conversations” and regular one to ones with all welfare Rights staff		Green	<p>Supervision completed for 2024-25</p> <p>“Career conversations” completed March 2025</p> <p>Supervision records held by SWRO next supervision due June 2025</p>

TP-7 Service Planning**Led by:** S. Tuite

Code	Task/Milestones	Period/Due By	Status	Outstanding Actions / Comments
7.1	Review community profile annually Prediction of type I,II and III cases based on 2024-25 figures Are: Type I - Type II - Type III -		Green	Annual reporting. Going forward annual report will provide a more detailed breakdown of type II and III cases which will inform ongoing service planning.
7.2	Produce 3-5 year plan to anticipate future demand, advice patterns and availability of resources		Green	Recurring Annual meeting with Senior Welfare Rights Officer and Trading Standards Manager. Plan for 2025-2030 produced April 2025
7.3	Produce annual team service plan		Green	Recurring Annual meeting with Senior Welfare Rights Officer and Trading Standards Manager – completed 20/02/2025 Discussed and agreed at team meeting June 2025
7.4	Consult with service users regarding suitability of service users premises every 3 years		Green	Recurring Annual meeting with Senior Welfare Rights Officer and Trading Standards Manager – completed 19/02/2025

Code	Task/Milestones	Period/Due By	Status	Outstanding Actions / Comments
7.5	Review promotion of the service across all platforms. Website, Councils Facebook page, Cascade and promotional materials		Green	Ongoing throughout the year ST produce report Groups not reaching – hard to engage MAT 8 project
7.6	Review opening hours every 2 years		Green	Recurring Annual meeting with Senior Welfare Rights Officer and Trading Standards Manager – completed 19/02/2025