

Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2021-22

August 2022

Contents

Foreword.....	3
Introduction	5
Our Vision.....	6
Latest Child Poverty Figures	6
Reasons for this Child Poverty Review	7
Children’s Rights.....	10
The Promise.....	12
Our Challenge	14
Population and Employment	15
Greener Development and Sustainability	17
Training	18
Key Areas of the Plan:	21
A. Increasing Income from Employment and Earnings	21
B. Increasing Income through Benefits	38
C. Cost of Living.....	41
D. Helping Families in Other Ways.....	60
E. Other Planned Work	67

Foreword

Welcome to the third annual review of Argyll and Bute's Child Poverty Action Plan. It has been a year that has brought fresh challenges for us all with food shortages, a cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine creating concern for us all. Not surprisingly some of our children and young people are experiencing anxiety and our Teachers, Educational Psychologists and School Counsellors are working with parents to support them.

Despite these challenges we remain committed to ending child poverty because we recognise just how important that goal is to creating a just society and, as Nelson Mandela said: A winner is a dreamer who never gives up.

We are happy to be able to report that we have had some important wins this year. We recognised that training our staff to understand poverty and to be able to better work with and support those experiencing it, was important. Working with The Poverty Alliance, One Parent Families Scotland and The Child Poverty Alliance we put together a broad range of training events for our multi-agency staff group and others. Some 220 professionals and our elected members received poverty awareness training and we were impressed by the insights that participants shared with us. Other courses ran on topics such as Single Parent Poverty Awareness; Benefit Basics in Scotland; Payments for Children in Scotland and Supporting Low-Income families.

Other wins come with our commitment to #KeepingThePromise and our continued development of a trauma informed workforce. Adding to this is our commitment to train staff in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy and over 50 staff have completed DDP level 1 training and our first cohort have commenced DDP level 2 training. This will support our commitment to dealing not only with the drivers of poverty but also the impacts of it and other traumas.

The axiom, "knowledge is power" is relevant when it comes to tackling child poverty and this year our advice services have worked tirelessly to get people the information they need to claim their rights and benefits. This has resulted in the client gain of £10,165,000, a remarkable win for our families. This work has been supported by Money Counts training and the wide circulation of the Food Aid Network (IFAN) Argyll and Bute Worrying about Money? Leaflet.

Knowledge also plays a key part in our engagement with our children and young people and a child friendly version of this report will be shared. Engagement is happening in schools, some young people have become Poverty Champions and a few attended the Poverty Awareness Training. Awareness of children's rights go hand in hand with tackling child poverty and this year saw Hermitage Academy in Helensburgh become the first secondary school in Argyll and Bute to receive gold accreditation in UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting School programme.

From free school meals and addressing holiday hunger, to setting up school clothing banks. From the success of our Flexible Food Fund, to the amazing work of Allenergy in helping people dealing with fuel poverty. From employability actions, to the rural growth deal and successful bids to the UK Community Renewal Fund. We would like

to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved for their hard work and commitment and to recommend this report to you.



Fiona Davies
Chief Officer Argyll & Bute
Health and Social Care
Partnership, Chair,
Strategic Children's
Group



Pippa Milne
Chief Executive Officer
Argyll & Bute Council



Pam Dudek
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Introduction

Welcome to the third review of the Argyll and Bute's Child Poverty Action Plan, 2021-2022. Although this year has brought challenges we have continued to move forward with our objective to work to reduce child poverty and its impacts across Argyll and Bute. The year has been marked for us by the delivery of a large number of training events for staff, relating to tackling and understanding poverty. Our Flexible Food Fund has continued to benefit families and there has been positive progress in areas such as employability, free school meals and holiday hunger, housing, client gain figures and engagement. Our multi-agency Child Poverty Action Group remains committed to tackling child poverty and the impact that it has on young lives. This year the group has acquired the services of a Project Assistant to support this work.

Nationally there has been the publication of the Scottish Government's second Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, "Best Start, Bright Futures 2022-2026" This makes a commitment to supporting families through all the challenges raised by the cost of living crisis, war in Europe and other events. Importantly it also states that:

The 2030 targets require us to work differently – placing an ever greater focus on families and the places they live. Through phased approaches to change, working in a small number of localities, we can identify the barriers to progress and the keys to removing these for families and partners.

In Argyll and Bute we welcome this approach as it recognises the challenges for families living in remote, rural and island places and acknowledges that solutions to child poverty must take into account the geography and key demographics of different areas. A young person living in a family on benefits on an island, attending school on the mainland and living in a School Hostel, has a very different experience to a young person living in a city in the central belt. Factors such as transport, supply issues in food chains and the need to travel to access some activities and medical appointments become key and will influence how far benefits will stretch and what money must be spent on.

The bottom line is that it is expensive to live in remote, rural and island places. As part of this we recognise that fuel poverty is a significant issue in Argyll and Bute but is not equally distributed throughout the region. For example Bute has 41-50% of its population in fuel poverty whereas Cowal has less than 20%. Fuel poverty hot spots are in the islands, Kintyre, Oban and Lorn. Our area has one of the highest fuel poverty rates in Europe with some areas paying more for gas delivery due to their remote status. Many areas have no access to mains gas so have no alternative to using more expensive alternatives. The impact on families can be severe, as Lynda Mitchell, Manager of ALLenergy says:

"The perceived image of fuel poverty is often an elderly person sitting with a blanket by the fire, but advisors have found that many clients are much younger, often families with children. As people switch their heating down or off to save money, fuel poverty manifests in a range of different behaviours, including seeking warmth in public places where it's free – for example, taking the free bus for a round trip because it's warm, or lingering in pubs, cafes, libraries, and other public places, to avoid being at home (particularly challenging during the pandemic). Other problems include not being able

to cook hot meals; not being able to wash or do laundry frequently enough for adequate personal hygiene; staying in bed for prolonged periods, living in one room, and being embarrassed to invite friends or neighbours into the home, leading to issues of loneliness, social isolation and reclusive behaviours.”

Poverty matters because there is increasing evidence to show that there are connections between poverty and issues such as: higher infant mortality rates, poor physical and mental health, family stress levels and breakdown, children becoming care experienced, poor educational, employment and social outcomes and drug and alcohol use. Domestic abuse can be impacted on by the stresses and financial hardships of poverty and this can lead to the break-up of families. Poverty can make people feel socially excluded, invisible and unsupported; all factors that can contribute to poor mental health and suicide. It must be asked what the cost economically to the country is of all of these factors and their impact on both services and the productivity of our workforce? If these impacts could be improved or eliminated by simply putting more money into people’s pockets through improving benefits and providing a living wage, would the cost in fact be less? Whatever the answer to that question is, we remain committed to making what difference we can and our vision remains:

Our Vision

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.

Latest Child Poverty Figures

On the 12th of July 2022 the End Child Poverty coalition published the latest local child poverty figures. Their research, covering the period to 2020/21, provides the best available estimates of child poverty at local authority level (below 60% median income after housing costs). Figures for Argyll and Bute are as follows:

Date	Number of Children in Poverty	Percentage of Children in Poverty	Percentage Point Change
2014 - 2015	2808	20.7%	
2020 - 2021	2325	18.9%	-1.8%

This positive change reflects the Scottish Government investment in the new Scottish child payment, other Social Security payments and a range of other measures. It also reflects the impact of a range of local measures taken to tackle child poverty and its impacts, which are noted in this report.

Such positive changes, seen in 26 of Scotland’s 32 local authority areas, demonstrate that taking action can make a difference. Scotland has the lowest rate of child poverty amongst countries of the UK at 21%, followed by England at 29% and Wales at 34%.

Reasons for this Child Poverty 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. To evidence the need for such action the Scottish Government commissioned research which found that by 2030/31, if no action was taken, it was estimated that 38% of children would be in relative poverty, 32% of children would be in absolute poverty, 17% of children would be in combined low income and material deprivation and 16% of children would be in persistent poverty.

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 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 cost of living crisis set to deepen and the World Bank suggesting that it might continue for several years, it must be acknowledged that it will be very difficult to meet the interim and final targets set by the Scottish Government with regards to tackling child poverty. However recent child poverty figures suggest that it is not impossible. As the Nuffield Foundation noted:

Inequalities are not inevitable, and some policies and interventions have led to improvements in young children's health. The Scottish national infant feeding strategy has led to increased rates of breastfeeding. Sure Start led to major health benefits for children from poorer neighbourhoods. National oral health programmes in Scotland and Wales have accelerated rates of improvement in children's oral health. The success of these interventions demonstrates that improvements in young children's health are possible with sustained policy effort.

The Nuffield Foundation; Carey Oppenheim, Richard Batcheler, Dr Dougal Hargreaves, Jordan Rehill, Dr Rakhee Shah

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 believe it is important to understand that tackling child poverty is more than just reaching targets because:

Poverty is not only experienced materially and socially, but also emotionally. Financial stress, not having an adequate income or work, reverberates through family life..... Poverty influences child outcomes indirectly where lack of income and economic pressure can lead to psychological distress, lack of control and choice, and the experience of stigma, all of which can in turn affect relationships within the family both between parents and parenting practices.

Changing Patterns of Poverty in Early Childhood; Nuffield Foundation; Sept 2021

Pupil Voice on Childhood Poverty

It can be difficult to talk to younger children about child poverty and to get them to share how they feel about the World about them. Some of our Schools have tried to achieve that in a non-threatening and engaging manner. These results give us insight into their World, a place where some of them will be experiencing the impacts of child poverty.

Group 1 (8 – 12 years-old)

What makes you happy	My friends Pets Food Family Nintendo Switch with my mum Throwing snow balls Edinburgh Zoo Sun Young carers School erm 50 50 (school program)
What do you see around you	Houses Cars Other people Snacks
What do you hear around you	Friends People talking Shouting Cars
What do you talk about	Music Friends Not much

What do you worry about	Dad might lose his job Might need to move and leave friends
What do you enjoy doing	Arts and crafts Skating Going to the beach making jewellery bowling painting making puppets clay art holidays friends play parks adventures climbing trees going for walks
What do you hope to gain	Get a dog Move to New Zealand I want to be an interior designer I want to go to Art school in Edinburgh I want to be a make-up artist I don't know

Group 5 – (11 years-old)

What do you enjoy doing?	Maths Swimming Singing Painting Dancing Telling jokes Football Spending time with family
What do you see around you?	children in same situation as me friends the sun British flag (hall was decorated for Jubilee)
What do you hear around you?	birds voices noises echo's
What do you worry about?	spiders deforestation phobia of holes something bad happening my mum and dad
What makes you happy?	my mum family football friends

	life
What do you hope to gain?	get better at football get a job when I'm older become a dinosaur expert become a nurse

Group discussion (5 – 11 year-olds)

How does Child Poverty impact me?	it doesn't as I am warm and loved and that's all I need I feel bad for others and donate to foodbanks
What does Child Poverty look like for you?	My Mum works really hard because I think she worries about money
What would Child Poverty feel like?	sad, cold, jealous of others, stressed, lonely, hungry, embarrassed, heartbroken, upset, angry

Children's Rights

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is one of the core international human rights treaties and is a universally agreed set of minimum child rights standards which is the most widely ratified of all the international conventions. Importantly the UNCRC introduces the concept of a child's 'evolving capacities' (Article 5), which states that direction and guidance provided by parents or others with responsibility for the child must take into account the capacities of the child to exercise rights on their own behalf. It includes four general principles that are not only rights in themselves but underpin every other right in the Convention:

- For rights to be applied without discrimination (Article 2) 6
- For the best interests of the child to be a primary consideration (Article 3)
- The right to life, survival and development (Article 6)
- The right to express a view and have that view given due weight (Article 12)

The UNCRC provides children with a series of individual rights, such as the right to education, health, name, nationality, play and an adequate standard of living. Additional rights have been included for particular groups, including disabled children, children who have been exploited or mistreated, refugee and migrant children, children in custody and children in care. Children's rights are inextricably linked with the rights of parents and carers, whose important role in children's lives is recognised throughout.

Children's rights are fundamental to all work tackling child poverty and should be reflected in the principles and objectives of all services that support children. This means not only direct services such as education, health and social care but also our political, social and economic infrastructures. When we look at a Strategic Children and Young People's Service Plan from A Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP) we expect to see needs and children's rights identified and considered. Local Authorities also need to show that is happening, for example, when a road is planned, street lighting changed or a Commissioning Strategy developed.

Argyll and Bute is committed to achieving that and to completing Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments when considering new work, policies and strategies. This document incorporates the principles of Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments.

In 2020 Argyll and Bute completed its first Children's Rights Report, setting out our commitment to embedding the UNCRC into policy and practice and demonstrating how children's rights are respected across our services. Since that time we have set up a multi-agency Children's Rights Group to forward that and ensure partnership working. The work of this group has included the development of an e-learning module for staff on Child Poverty and Children's Rights.

Link to Argyll and Bute's Children's Rights Report:

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/childrens_rights_report_2020_final.pdf

Another success in terms of children's rights work in Argyll and Bute has been the roll out of the Rights Respecting Programme across schools. UNICEF UK works with schools across the country to embed children's rights in a schools' ethos, raise awareness of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and to increase understanding of children's rights.

Hermitage Academy in Helensburgh has become the first secondary school in Argyll and Bute to receive gold accreditation in UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting School programme. Hermitage Academy is the second school in Argyll and Bute to receive gold accreditation – the first being Hermitage Primary in 2020.

Link to Argyll and Bute's Children's Rights Report:

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/childrens_rights_report_2020_final.pdf

Link to Links to Argyll and Bute's Child Poverty Action Report 2019

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/child_poverty_action_plan_0.pdf

Scot Gov.: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: a guide for children and young people

[The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: a guide for children and young people - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

The Promise

A key consideration when looking at our work on tackling child poverty in Argyll and Bute must be keeping The Promise. The Promise, launched by the Scottish Government in Autumn 2020 originates in the findings of The Care Review and makes a commitment to care experienced infants, children, young people, adults and families, that every child grows up loved, safe and respected, able to realise their full potential. It demands a multi-agency approach to support shifts in policy, practice and culture across Scotland and make the difference that is required. In Argyll and Bute a strong, multi-agency commitment has been made to delivering on The Promise and that work has continued, despite the considerable barriers raised by the Covid-19 pandemic, EU exit and the current cost of living crisis.

The Scottish Government is committed to Plan 21-24, this states that: Every child that is 'in care' in Scotland will have access to intensive support that ensures their educational and health needs are fully met.

Local Authorities and Health Boards will take active responsibility towards care experienced children and young people, whatever their setting of care, so they have what they need to thrive.

There are clear links between The Promise and tackling child poverty at a local and a national level. It states that there must be a significant, ongoing and persistent commitment to ending poverty and mitigating its impacts for Scotland's children, families and communities. With both areas of work support for families within a whole family approach is emphasised, as is the need for organisations and communities to accept that creating real and sustainable change is everyone's responsibility. Also shared is the recognition of the impact of disadvantaged and stressful living conditions and how they can interact to cause outcomes where poverty can lead to children becoming care experienced and families requiring wraparound support.

In all of this the importance of children's voices being heard is central and must be made a part of decision making and a process of listening to their needs and aspirations. Argyll and Bute HSCP makes this a central tenant of all their work and is committed to the recognition of the importance of Article 12 which states:

Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; UN
20/11/89.

Argyll and Bute Council and the HSCP have made a commitment to tackling child poverty through delivering on The Promise and is working to ensure that this is reflected throughout its strategies policies and plans. It is recognised that the geography and the remote and rural nature of many small communities creates significant challenges in ensuring equality of services but there is a commitment to ensuring that happens. It is also recognised that this is a journey and that there will be more to accomplish along the way but some of the key developments over the last two years have included:

Argyll and Bute has been a national Pilot area for the delivery of trauma training and, to date, in excess of 95% of education and residential care workforce have undertaken Trauma Training, either on line self-learning or delivered training. This training is across the whole workforce, including those responsible for the care and support of care experienced children and care leavers.

The Bute and Cowal test site is exploring a model for intensive whole family support for children on the edge of care, in particular where parental substance misuse or poor mental health are key factors.

Over 50 staff have completed DDP (Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy) level 1 training and our first cohort have commenced DDP level 2 training.

“Together Apart” assessment training has been implemented for social workers supporting brothers and sisters and permanence planning guidance has been revised to ensure greater weight is given to maintaining relationships.

Restraints or “safe holds” have not been used in any of the three children’s residential houses for over 5 years. Staff have been trained in therapeutic crisis intervention which has contributed to no longer using these interventions.

Who Cares? Scotland provides a widely understood relationship based advocacy service for all care experienced children.

Parents affected by poor mental health or with learning difficulties have good access to independent advocacy through Lomond and Argyll Advocacy Services. There are plans to review advocacy services for parents with care experienced children.

All foster carers have been offered trauma informed PACE training.

A Principal Teacher for Care Experienced Children and Young People has been appointed to lead on improving educational outcomes to oversee their education.

There has been an appointment of Health and Wellbeing Liaison officers in each local area to provide intensive support for care experienced children and their families.

The implementation of a Care Experienced CAMHS service has been commenced. A Health Manager with specific responsibility for care experienced children has been appointed.

50% of schools have signed up for the Rights Respecting Schools Approach and are following the framework for awards and 26% of schools are involved in Argyll and Bute's Local Authority Nurture Strategy programme.

There is a long established multi agency approach to early and effective intervention with young people to avoid criminalisation and target effective early help.

All care experienced young people leaving care are entitled to maximum points and prioritised for allocation, housing and social work plan together to ensure that housing options are consistent with a young person's identified needs.

Our Challenge

There is currently a higher percentage of children in low income families in Argyll and Bute than the Scottish national average. It is difficult to assess why this is the case but the difference in wage levels between Argyll and Bute and the Scottish average coupled with the higher costs of remote, rural and island living will be factors. It is also likely that the effects of the pandemic on our key employment areas, exacerbated by EU exit and the war in Ukraine, are important. The current cost of living crisis is being particularly felt in Argyll and Bute due to the high cost of fuel. The Council, Allenergy and other organisations are employing a range of measure to combat fuel poverty and improve the condition of existing housing stock.

Children in Low Income Families

	Argyll and Bute	Scotland
2017 - 2018	17.3%	18.6%
2018 - 2019	16.7%	16.5%
2019 - 2020	17.2%	16.8%

Households on Universal Credit - November 2021

AREA	SINGLE PARENT – CHILD DEPENDANTS	COUPLE – CHILD DEPENDANTS	TOTAL
COWAL	88	60	148
DUNOON	161	67	228
HELENSBURGH AND LOMOND SOUTH	77	23	100
HELENSBURGH CENTRAL	159	38	197
ISLE OF BUTE	122	48	170
KINTYRE AND THE ISLANDS	67	34	101
LOMOND NORTH	86	47	133
MID ARGYLL	110	50	160
OBAN NORTH AND LORN	133	60	193
OBAN SOUTH AND THE ISLES	156	69	225
SOUTH KINTYRE	97	63	160
TOTAL	1256	559	1815

Total paid from Scottish Welfare Fund (Crisis Grants & Community Care Grants combined):

2018 - 2019	£443,243
2019 - 2020	£435,112
2020 - 2021	£641,017

Numbers in Receipt of Council Tax Reduction

Council Tax Reduction Caseload 01/04/2021	6,531
Council Tax Reduction Caseload 2/03/2022	6,930

Population and Employment

Argyll and Bute is a geographically large and diverse area and is the second largest local authority in Scotland at 690, 899 hectares. It is also the third most sparsely populated area with only 13 people per square kilometre or 0.13 per hectare compared to the Scottish average of 0.70 (Mid-Year 2017 Population Estimates. It covers almost 9% of the total Scottish land area (Census 2011). The area's population of 85,870 live within an area stretching from Helensburgh and Dunoon along the Clyde, Loch Lomond to the East, the Mull of Kintyre to the south, Atlantic Islands to the west, and the Sound of Mull and Appin to the north. Nearly half of Argyll and Bute's population (48.4%) live in areas classified by the Scottish Government as 'rural' while 17% live on islands. 80% of Argyll and Bute's population live within 1km of the coast. Argyll and Bute has 23 inhabited islands (Census 2011), more than any other local authority in Scotland.

The spread of population brings challenges in terms of infrastructure, services and providing employment. There is an aging population and this causes difficulties in terms of creating, attracting and retaining both employment and employees. Further the nature of the tourist industry (a major employer) means that it is difficult to source housing for people already in the area and those wanting to come and work. Providing good transport links and the right employability skills and qualifications are key to both meeting that need, encouraging new employers to the area and supporting existing ones.

Population

	Total population (2020) Scotland	Argyll and Bute
Male	2,665,200	42,700
Female	2,800,800	42,700
Totals	5,466,000	85,400

Population aged 16-64 (2020)

	AB Numbers	AB %	Scotland %
All People Aged 16-64	50,500	59.1	63.9
Males Aged 16-64	25,900	60.6	64.5
Females Aged 16-64	24,600	57.6	63.3

The nature and level of income through employment is a key driver of poverty. In Argyll and Bute we have a very limited industrial base and our main employing areas are: tourism and the service sector. The percentage of people employed in low income sectors in Argyll and Bute has changed little in the last 5 years, from 32% in 2017 to 32.5% in 2020 (Annual Population Survey). Over 87% of employee jobs in the area are provided within the service sector, public administration, education, health, forestry and fisheries, food and defence.

Employment and unemployment (Jul 2020-Jun 2021)

	AB Number	AB %	Scotland %
Economically Active	39,700	77.6	75.9
In Employment	39,000	76.2	72.2
Employees	31,400	63.1	64.3
Self Employed	7,500	13.1	7.6
Unemployed	1,500	3.7	4.7

Whilst a higher percentage of people in Argyll and Bute are employed or self-employed than the Scottish average, wages are lower and it is more common for people to have more than one job, work part-time or be on zero hours contracts.

There is a lower percentage of workless households in Argyll and Bute than the Scottish average, 14.7% compared to 18.1% (Dec-Jan2020).

Lower wages, combined with the gender pay gap in Argyll and Bute, make it more difficult for women and single parent families led by a woman, financially.

Average Earnings by place of residence (2020)

	AB (Pounds)	Scotland (Pounds)
Gross Weekly Pay		
Full-Time Workers	553.6	595
Male Full-Time Workers	606.7	626.3
Female Full-Time Workers	477.1	562.5
Hourly Pay - Excluding Overtime		
Full-Time Workers	14.64	15.63
Male Full-Time Workers	15.60	15.87
Female Full-Time Workers	13.54	15.31

Median Weekly Earnings (Residence-Based, Full-time)

2018	£483.4
2019	£528.4
2020	£555.6
2021	£562.7

Gender Pay Gap in Argyll and Bute

Argyll and Bute - Ranked 12 in table of local authorities
Men earn 13.6% more than women.

Greener Development and Sustainability

We are committed to creating green jobs and businesses within a low carbon economy and giving young people the skills they need to become involved in this work. Examples of this include successful projects put forward to the UK Community Renewal Fund by Argyll and Bute, including the West Coast UAV Innovation Logistics and Training Hub, and Curriculum Development for STEM Hub Projects.

Also, being considered under the Scottish Government's Islands Programme (IP); is the Island Community Hall Connectivity Project – which would enhance digital connectivity to allow access to superfast broadband. Community Halls and Centres would operate a new hybrid-meeting model and act as community digital hubs.

Another example, being developed as part of the Rural Growth Deal, is creating a Low Carbon Economy. This includes exploring options for the decarbonisation of Islay using a 'whole systems' approach that will consider power, heat and transport as well as placing the needs of the individual and business consumer at its centre to ensure that future energy systems are sustainable and support inclusive economic growth.

In addition there are other areas of work, such as providing free period products, developing school clothing banks and the Food Forum that offer an opportunity for poverty actions and sustainability to be more closely aligned in a way that helps to tackle stigma while enabling dignity and choice for those in need.



Training

One of our commitments for the year 2021 – 2022 was to deliver training, related to understanding and tackling child poverty, for a wide range of staff groups across Argyll and Bute, including HSCP, Education and the Third Sector and Housing. This was made possible by monies from the Flexible Fund which enabled us to commission the Poverty Alliance, Child Poverty Action Group and One Parent Scotland to work with us. A number of training packages were developed and delivered on multiple occasions over a three month period. It was also agreed that **Poverty Awareness Training** would be delivered to Councillors following the May elections. Take up was good across the board and it is hoped that we will be able to repeat some of this training in 2023.

Courses had different target groups and the intention was to have both practical and consciousness raising outcomes. For example the course **Single Parent Poverty Awareness** was aimed at all sector workers with an interest in understanding the specific issues, misconceptions and barriers single parents face and why single parents are uniquely placed in the poverty statistics. Also for managers who employ single parents and may want to know more about potential barriers to work faced by single parents and how they may single parent proof their practices.

Poverty Awareness Training was delivered in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council by a consortium formed of the Poverty Alliance (PA), One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland (CPAG) to a total of 220 professionals, over 20 occasions, was rated valuable or very valuable by all 81 participants who completed evaluations and was most commonly described as 'informative'.

How you would rate the course overall?

● Very Valuable	56
● Valuable	35
● Of Little Value	0



Not only was it perceived as very valuable / valuable by most participants but it enabled us to see what a large number of staff identified as priorities for address poverty in Argyll and Bute summarised as:

- Investment in employment opportunities, transport,
- Transport and access to public transport
- Access to health care services
- Access to childcare
- Access to further education and support to young people
- Access to affordable good quality housing



One of the most positive things to come out of the training was the powerful messages that staff took from it to carry forward into their professional and personal lives, hopefully improving services for those experiencing poverty and deprivation. It was noted that whilst a local member of the Scottish Youth Parliament attended as did two local young Poverty Champions, it would have been better if more young people could have attended. It was also noted that most participants were female and the course could have been more balanced on gender.



Other Courses:

There were also a number of courses for those who worked directly with families and needed to know how best to help them in areas such as Social Security and other benefits; how to make sure that people are claiming their full entitlement. These courses were well subscribed and received positive feedback; they included:

- **Benefit Basics in Scotland**
- **Payments for Children in Scotland**
- **Supporting Low-income Families**
- **Scottish Social Security – an Introduction**

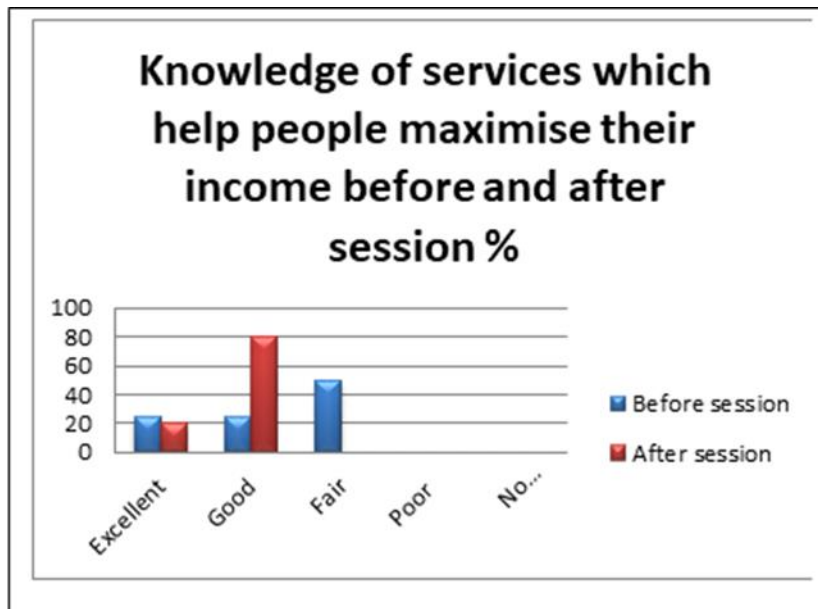
COURSE	DATE
Single Parent Poverty Awareness	January to March 2022
Benefit basics in Scotland	12 – 13 January 2022
Payments for children in Scotland	18 January 2022
	22 March 2022
Supporting low-income families	25 January 2022
	18 / 23 February 2022
	2 / 14 / 30 March 2022
Scottish social security – an introduction	9 March 2022
	24 March 2022
Poverty Awareness Training	January to March 2022

In addition to the commissioned training events there has been the delivery of **Money Counts Training**. 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. It has been adapted for Argyll and Bute and is currently delivered by Heather McAdam from NHS Highland and Mags Todd from A&B Council.

The sessions aimed to:

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

The sessions also raised awareness of the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) Argyll and Bute *Worrying about money?* Leaflet and encouraged participants to use this when discussing money issues with clients. These sessions are still taking place. Considerable efforts have been made by a raft of organisations and departments to ensure that every household in Argyll and Bute receives the IFAN Leaflet and this has included sending it out with Council Tax bills and making it available via Council and other media sites, Community Groups, Living Well Networks and Food Banks.



Key Areas of the Plan:

A. Increasing Income from Employment and Earnings

1. Employability

Delivery of the Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) continues within the broader context of the No One Left Behind policy direction. <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/forms/contact-employability-team>

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 Every Child, Every Chance: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022, through appropriate support focusing on intensive key worker support.

With effect from May 2022 the 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**.

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

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/forms/contact-employability-team>

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 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 47 parents across the 6 target group have signed up to receive support from our two PESF Engagement Workers, of these parents:

32 (68%) were unemployed and 11 (32%) low income employed on commencing support.

9 of the 32 unemployed have now ceased support. All 9 are in a positive destination, 8 in employment (89%) and 1 has moved into full time education (11%).

2 of the 11 employed have now ceased support, 2 (100%) of these parents have experienced an increase in their household income.

Case Study – Employed Parent on Low Income

<p>Who – tell us about the participant</p>	<p>A is a 30 year old mother of three children. She was a self-referral to PESF and had become aware of our service via one of Argyll and Bute Council’s Facebook posts. She was working part time as a Carer and hoped to increase her household income.</p>
<p>Barriers Identified</p>	<p>A’s main barrier was the lack of affordable childcare for her youngest child which was preventing her from taking on any additional hours. During the completion of her Initial Needs Assessment she expressed an interest in starting up her own cleaning business. She thought that this would be a way for her to take on additional hours whilst working around her children/childcare at the same time.</p>
<p>Impact – how has the participant changed or moved forward that would not have been the case without the support (training /learning participation progress made including soft skills and any milestones / outcomes achieved).</p>	<p>Her PESF Keyworker discussed various options and a referral was put into the Business Gateway on her behalf.</p> <p>Through the support of PESF and Business Gateway A has now set up her own small cleaning business which is going from strength to strength. She is taking on new clients on a regular basis and due to her self-employment she is able to work around her children thus avoiding any further childcare costs.</p> <p>Her 3 year old has secured a place within one of our local nursery settings. This will then enable her to take on further additional hours.</p> <p>Her new business has made a significant difference to her household income, which will increase further when her youngest child starts nursery.</p>

<p>Quote from participant – their views on the support offered and outcome achieved?</p>	<p>“I am very grateful for the help and support I’ve received from my PESF Key Worker. Starting up my own business was something I had thought about for a long time but I didn’t know where to begin. She was really good at giving me all the information I needed and referring me onto the Business Gateway team. I am thrilled to bits to say that I now run my own business, I don’t have to pay any additional childcare costs and my income has increased. Thank you!”</p>
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Case Study 2 – Unemployed Parent

<p>Who – tell us about the participant</p>	<p>B is a 32 year old single parent of 4 children. She is currently unemployed and was referred to the Parental Employability Support Fund by the DWP.</p>
<p>Barriers Identified</p>	<p>B’s main barrier to work is the lack of affordable childcare in her local area. A secondary barrier was the fact that she had only completed primary school education and had left school with no qualifications.</p> <p>In her Initial Needs Assessment she expressed an interest in starting up her own nail technician business as this was something that she really enjoyed doing as a hobby for friends and family. She thought that this would be a way for her to find employment but work around her children and childcare at the same time.</p>
<p>Impact – how has the participant changed or moved forward that would not have been the case without the support (training /learning participation progress made including soft skills and any milestones / outcomes achieved).</p>	<p>Her Engagement Worker discussed various options however B was initially unsure about starting any type of college course to help achieve her goals. With the support of her Engagement Worker she agreed to sign up for an online nail technician diploma course where she could work at her own pace and own time.</p> <p>When B started her online course it became apparent that she would need training resources and materials to help her to complete it. PESF was able to purchase these for her.</p> <p>To date B has passed every module and is really enjoying the course. She has also approached hairdressers in her local area with a view to one of them allowing her to rent out space to set up her own nail bar in the near future.</p>

<p>Quote from participant – their views on the support offered and outcome achieved?</p>	<p>“The help and support that I have received from PESF is fantastic. After leaving school at 12 years old I never dreamed that I would be able to complete any type of further education course. The PESF workers have also been amazing at helping me to purchase the materials and resources that I needed to complete my course. Without their help I could never have afforded to purchase these things. I am getting a lot more help and support than I expected, thank you”</p>
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One major challenge has been recruiting staff to deliver PESF. A lack of suitable applicants resulted in non-appointment to the full time PESF Engagement Worker advertised.

Fair Start Scotland (FSS)

Fair Start Scotland has gone very well in the last year. Due to the pandemic delivery has continued remotely resulting in increased engagement by the participants. Feedback received highlights this is a preferred delivery method for all current participants. Referrals from island communities have also increased.

Over the last 12 months 77 new participants commenced individually tailored provision FSS. Keyworkers supported these participants as well as existing caseloads and successfully moved a total of 39 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 JETS, Kickstart, NOLB, PESF and the YPG. Parents in particular are opting for PESF, in the last year only one parent joined the FSS service.

The Young Person’s Guarantee (YPG)

The YPG has been well received in particular the 26 week waged opportunities available January to September 2021.

A total of 62 young people (15 island based) commenced subsidised employment with 46 employers (8 island based). These opportunities exceeded the target of 60 by 2. Of the 62 young people, to date 48 (77.41%) have moved into a positive destination; 37 (59.67%) remaining in employment with the same employer, 9 (14.52%) moved to work with another employer and 2 (3.22%) moved into further education.

YPG Pre-employment Support delivered by Third Sector partner organisations, supported 74 formal learning agreements for young people by the end of March 2022. The target was originally 60.

YPG volunteering opportunities delivered by Third Sector partner organisations supported 30 young people by the end of March 2022. Of these 3 have left early or

completed; 2 (66%) have moved into employment and 1 has disengaged (33%). The remaining 27 young people are doing well and receiving support from a mentor based on individual need.

Modern Apprenticeships delivered by Argyll and Bute Council's 'Growing Our Own' Team saw 4 young people commence employment. One young person has completed his qualification and secured employment with another department, the remaining 3 are on track to complete. Training providers are continuing to work well with the apprentices.

Kickstart

Argyll and Bute Council is a Gateway Organisation for the UK Government's Kickstart Scheme for 25 employers and 50 placements further to approval from the DWP on 18th February 2021. It is hoped that the Young Person's Guarantee will be used to augment the support provided through the UK Government's Kickstart Scheme by a further six months.

Update: Argyll and Bute Council acted as a Gateway Organisation for 32 employers offering 66 work placements. Despite DWP's best efforts just 38 work placements were filled and the remaining places were either withdrawn due to lack of suitable applicants or the employer decided not to proceed in the scheme.

Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE)

Monies received to fund a Single Point of Contact and Engagement Worker for employers and individuals across Argyll and Bute were not fully utilised due to a lack of interest in the posts advertised. This is thought to be due to the short nature of the contracts. Fortunately the tsunami of unemployment predicted due to the pandemic did not materialise resulting in minimal PACE activity. Following re-advertisement one post was filled, 50% funded by PACE 50% No One Left Behind up until end March 2022.

Plans Ahead

To recruit an additional full time PESF Engagement Worker to allow additional marketing of the service and increased engagement with parent target groups.
To continue marketing of FSS service to encourage parents to sign up to receive support should this be identified as the best option to suit individual needs.

Phase 2 YPG continues with 90 Employer Recruitment Incentive places by end of March 2023. To date 39 of these have been filled to include 10 Kickstart extensions. Interest is increasing from employers who are keen to take advantage of the funding on offer to recruit a young person.

YPG Pre-employment Support for 2022-23 (partner delivery) has a target of 54 individuals, where 60% enter a positive destination.

Pre-employment Support, NOLB (aged 25+) (partner delivery) has a target of 42 individuals, where 60% enter a positive destination.

Long Term Unemployment Intermediate Labour Market Support (aged 25+) focuses on the delivery of a caseload of 28 (partner delivery), where 70% enter sustainable employment by March 2023.

ABEP improvement Action Plan completed and residual actions now incorporated into the ABEP Delivery Plan, 2022-25 (working document) and submitted to the Scottish Government.

UK Shared Prosperity Funding Investment Plan, 2022-25 to be prepared by 1st August 2022. In-house employability provision to be incorporated under the people & skills investment priority, as team reliant of external funding.

Based on the No One Left Behind policy direction, focus has been given to strengthening Local Employability Partnerships to take forward the No One Left Behind Phase 2 Delivery Plan. The preparation of a Local Delivery and Improvement Plan, and the COVID-19 response based on the principles which underpin the approach contained within the partnership agreement with the Scottish Government.

[Updates on previous review content](#)

On the 3rd November 2021 it was announced that eight of the 11 Argyll and Bute bids to the UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF) had been successful, and a three month extension has been granted for project delivery from end of March 2022 to the end of June 2022. This is a fantastic result for the area, with an overall award of circa £2m.

The successful projects, listed below, will contribute to the economic and social recovery of Argyll and Bute, plus many will provide significant input to the outline and full business cases for Rural Growth Deal proposals.

UK Community Renewal Fund – Successful Projects for Argyll and Bute	
Project Name	Project Value
The Seaweed Academy	£399,721
MACC Hydrogen Futures Viability Study	£181,170
Optimising Carbon Sequestration for Community Wealth Building	£260,000
The Dunoon Project Stage Two	£352,600
West Coast UAV Innovation Logistics and Training Hub	£170,000
Curriculum Development for STEM Hub Projects	£100,000
Driving Economic Growth Through a Bounce Back Curriculum	£269,856
Recovery and Regeneration of Tarbert	£257,250
Total Project Value	£1,990,597

Work on key strands of economic activity continue, including Rural Growth Deal, Levelling-Up and delivery of Community Renewal Fund projects by a range of public and private sector stakeholders (as noted in Table 1 above).

In particular, Argyll and Bute Council has received £1.449m from the Scottish Government funding to deliver COVID Economic Recovery Fund. A number of interventions have been approved to support local economic recovery and cost of living impacts on low-income households. This includes a Small Business Development Grant and a New Enterprise Support Grant, both offering financial support of up to £3,000 with associated eligibility criteria. It is anticipated that this funding support will be open to applicants in May 2022, with applications to the Small Business Development Grant open until 31st January 2023 and those to the New Enterprise Support Grant open until 31st August 2022, or sooner once funds are fully committed. An additional Sector Support Grant will also be launched in due course. All three grants will be administered by the Business Gateway team, Economic Growth.

Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team has a number of sources of support available to help people into work - whether for young people looking to go into a job or further education, employers looking to set up job placements, or supporting the long-term unemployed to access skills, training and jobs.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/forms/contact-employability-team>
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/helping-people-work>

The Scottish Government's Islands Programme (IP):

New proposals, which would see major investment in a host of ambitious projects across Argyll and Bute's island communities, are in development. Councillors approved a range of options for possible inclusion in a funding bid to the Scottish Government's Islands Programme (IP).

The initiative is a five-year, £30 million investment to help the delivery of the National Islands Plan (NIP). It supports projects that encourage population growth, deliver on Scottish Government net-zero ambitions and support a green economic recovery from the impact of the pandemic.

The 2022/23 programme will see £4 million allocated across the six island local authorities via a competitive application process with a maximum of five applications per local authority.

The projects under consideration include:

Coll / Colonsay - enhancing airport infrastructure at Colonsay and Coll airports including; CCTV, creation of a small fire-training rig on both islands, improved accessibility and new white lining machinery and runway surface cleaning equipment.
Mull - progressing phase two of Tobermory public realm work and flood resilience.
Bute – a multi-use Places to Play games area next to Rothesay swimming pool and a play park adjacent to Winter Gardens/Visitor centre.
Kerrera – the final phase of the new Kerrera North South Road.
Islay – improvements to School Street, Bowmore, public toilets at Distillery House and a new footway to improve safety at the narrow section of the road.
Jura - improved infrastructure for Jura Ferry including a permanent alternative access solution for small passenger only vessel when the Eilean Dhiura is off service.

Bute - provision of new business units for lease to aid recovery and growth.
Port Ellen – enhanced access to Port Ellen ferry terminal to include improved footways from the ferry to the village, a wider road and new bus bay close to the island’s war memorial.

Islay - new car parking next to Bowmore pier.

Ulva - purchase of a larger ferry suitable for carrying pickups or trailers, loose freight and livestock.

Island community hall - connectivity project – this additional option would enhance digital connectivity to allow access to superfast broadband. Community halls/centres would operate a new hybrid-meeting model and act as community digital hubs.

Under the scheme, local authorities can submit up five applications each and must apply via a bidding process. Applications close 10 June 2022.

Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth said:

As our island communities continue the process of recovery from the pandemic, a successful application to the Islands Programme would be a major boost to residents, businesses and visitors.

As many of the projects are at varying stages of development; the challenge will be the competitive nature of the bid process, the short timeframe for both the submission of the bid and securing the funding within the timeframe. We expect a second round of the Islands Programme in 2023.

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 2021, we delivered 2,317 Career Information, Advice and Guidance engagements for 1,475 school pupils through a mix of group and one-to-one sessions.

For more information, please click on the following link. [What We Do - Scotland's Career Service](#)

School Leaver Cohort 20/21 - 801 young people left school during the 20/21 school cohort and our team worked hard over the summer months to follow up those who had left to ensure support was offered. The 2021 Annual Participation Measure showed that of the 3,168 16-19 year olds in Argyll & Bute 93.5% 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 2021, we delivered 312 Career Information, Advice and Guidance engagements for 190 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 Youth 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. PACE Support in Argyll and Bute for the operational year April 2021 – March 2022 seen 5 employer and 47 individuals receiving PACE Information.

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 2021, we have employed 7 new modern apprentices. 4 of which were funded as part of the Young Persons Guarantee which was supported by the Employability Team. This brings the total number of apprentices employed to 69. During this period, 6 apprentices have successfully completed their apprenticeship. Out of those 6, 4 have gone onto secure posts with Argyll and Bute Council. Overall, we still have a high rate of apprentices going onto secure employment with Argyll and Bute Council on completion with 75% 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 reviewed the tools we have in place to support apprentices and mentors to ensure apprentices continue to get a positive experience despite our hybrid working environment. We have also continued to offer our foundation apprenticeship in social services children and young people across schools within Argyll and Bute. 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. Over the past few months, we have begun to relook at our materials to support work placements and promote the council as an employer to provide awareness to young people of the opportunities which are available to them within Argyll and Bute.

Education 2021-2022

Following a period of remote learning and prioritising the re-introduction of P1-3 pupils in schools, primary pupils returned to school full time from the 15th March 2021. From the 15th March, all secondary pupils received a combination of face to face teaching alongside remote learning. Secondary schools worked closely with their local communities and council to decide how to safely balance in school learning based on their local context. Senior phase students (S4-S6) who were taking national qualifications were given priority for face to face lessons in school.

After the Spring Break 2021, all pupils returned to full time in-school learning, with mitigating measures in place to support the health and safety of the school community and minimise disruption to educational continuity. Schools have managed changes to guidance throughout the academic year. Argyll and Bute's schools have been consistently and effectively responsive to the directives of the Scottish Government. 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 Covid absences placed on our school communities.

The Education Authority clearly recognises the risks which periods of school closure have posed for learners' progress. It has been working closely with schools to ensure that all aspects of educational provision balance children's welfare, health and wellbeing needs with the requirement to ensure that any gaps in learning caused by school closure are addressed. The Health and Wellbeing of our whole school community, Nurture, Literacy and Numeracy recovery and Outdoor learning have been key priorities in supporting the return to school.

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. The role of PT Recovery and Renewal – Literacy and Numeracy was created in October 2021. Since then, we have used authority data to establish contacts within a number of schools where pupils were at risk of falling behind. The PT Recovery and Renewal has worked 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. Parents / carers have been supported through the development of a website outlining simple ways in which they can support their child's learning at home. Bespoke training in a range of literacy and numeracy resources has been delivered to staff. Individual school support has been provided as well as a range of CLPL opportunities for staff across the authority, focussing particularly on developmentally appropriate pedagogical approaches that offer support and challenge for pupils at their stage of development, rather than their chronological age. Many CLPL opportunities focus in particular on writing as this is an area where pupils have struggled over lockdown.

Digital technology has continued to be used to engage pupils and parents with online platforms such as Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams and SeeSaw. Schools have continued to respond to pupil needs and family circumstance, where possible, providing materials during periods of isolation. Recognising the importance of family involvement and engagement in improving outcomes for children and young people, the local authority invested in technology to ensure that Parents' Evenings could continue via online appointment sessions.

A PT of Nurture was appointed to support the delivery of Trauma training and the development of Trauma Informed schools as part of our "Our Children Their Nurturing Education". This work has been implemented to date through 2 cohorts (in March 2021 and November 21) of training and has engaged 29 schools to date. From this, 5 schools have achieved bronze accreditation (Nurture Committed), 2 have achieved silver (Nurture Aware). A third cohort of training will focus on early years establishments. Our Children Their Nurturing Education (OCTNE) and the work of our schools is included as the first case study in Education Scotland's published report *Health and Wellbeing: a thematic review*, sharing the effective interventions delivered in Argyll and Bute. The mental health and wellbeing of pupils has been further supported by the introduction of counselling service within schools has also helped support the health and wellbeing of young people.

Outdoor learning has been key approach to re-connecting pupils to their school community, providing a healthy learning environment, looking after physical wellbeing, re-establishing positive relationships and managing the change from learning at home to learning in school. The education services have been working closely with local

outdoor education providers since March 2021 to support children and young people throughout the authority recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Originally, the providers worked with the secondary sector whose young people were learning from home and in some cases not engaging with school. These young people were offered a chance to carry out activities that were out with their normal comfort zone. Activities included: team building, fire building skills, orienteering, map reading and archery. Following the summer holidays, the programme was extended to include every school across Argyll & Bute, including those very remote, rural schools. Feedback on the programme has been positive from all involved, including parents, teaching staff and – most importantly – the young people themselves. Active Schools provided further targeted support for young people who struggled with the transition back to school, using sport and teamwork to raise self-esteem and help pupils re-establish a sense of belonging.

Primary Schools have also capitalised on outdoor learning opportunities. The success of this work was evidenced within Thematic Inspection evidence by Education Scotland that examined outdoor learning approaches. Argyll and Bute features in the report as a result of these thematic inspections.

A Maximising Attendance working group has examined attendance issues within schools since the return to school in August 21. A Principal Teacher for Maximising Attendance (temporary) was appointed (April 22) to work with schools and families to address barriers to attendance in order to improve outcomes for children/young people and their families.

A summer programme of events delivered to young people across Argyll & Bute Council who were adversely affected by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The programme was funded by Scottish Government and was run by Argyll & Bute Council in partnership with other organisations. The funding was for the delivery of activities, childcare and food for children aged 5-14 years old from low income families. We engaged with around 1,600 young people each week of the 3 week programme. There were 3,000 eligible.

Planning is underway for the Summer Activities again this year. There have been some changes to the eligibility criteria. We will continue to target families as we did last year, although the priorities laid out this year are as follows:

- Children from lone parent families
- Children from ethnic minority families
- Children from families with a disabled adult or child
- Children from families with a young mother (under 25)
- Children from families with a child under 1 year old Children from larger families (3+ children)

Based on the criteria, the number expected to be eligible is in the region of 4,000. 20 Education staff signed up for the Poverty Awareness Training delivered by the Poverty Alliance through Argyll and Bute Council. There was representation from all across the education service at this training including Early Years, Education Management, Head Teacher, class teachers and Family Liaison Workers. Pupils from a secondary school Pupil Equity Group were also invited to attend this training. In

Partnership with the Child Poverty Action Group, a follow up professional learning session was delivered to discuss approaches to capturing parent and youth voice on child poverty. Work was highlighted that had been undertaken in schools with regards to the cost of the school day. This session resulted in some small group work and targeted individual work to capture the views of those with lived poverty experience. This will feed into individual school Pupil Equity Fund Plans and School Improvement Plans. Strong parental and pupil voice views express that the school clothing recycling/exchange programmes are welcomed. A parental survey undertaken in March 22 showed that 62% of parents/carers agreed or strongly agreed that the cost of the school day was affordable. Those strongly disagreeing equated to 6.5% of respondents with the remaining neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Survey evidence from 2 of our large secondary schools demonstrated that there are a lot of activities to do within Argyll & Bute, however 14% identified a lack of transport as a barrier to accessing activities. 35% of young people identified that they rely on parents/carers to transport them to activities because they are living in a countryside location; this is 19% higher than the Scottish comparison. 4% of pupils cannot participate in activities outside of school due to finance, this is 1% below the Scottish comparison figure.

On 10th January, under 22's have been eligible for free bus travel in Scotland. Schools have supported the promotion of this entitlement.

Early Years

Following a period of remote learning and prioritising the reopening of all ELC settings and childminders, children returned full time from the 15th March 2021.

Mitigating measures are in place to support the health and safety of the nursery community and minimise disruption to their education and its continuity. The settings in Argyll and Bute have been consistently and effectively responsive to the directives of the Scottish Government and adhered to guidance from the Care Inspectorate. All settings continued to have contingency plans in place for any return to remote learning and effective communication with parents/carers from settings and the Authority's Early Years Team have been a priority. The Early Years Team has supported settings continuously over the last year when there have been high rates of absence due to Covid-19, to ensure that the settings remained open for children to access their education.

Our Cluster Leads, in particular, have planned for and carried out targeted work for children living in lower bands of SIMD. Our Family Support workers have been liaising with Health Visitors to support families to address health and well-being concerns, parental advice and supporting children returning to ELCs after a period of closure.

The support officers have worked closely with settings to track and assess learners' progress in literacy, numeracy and other curricular areas, in order that the next steps in learning can be identified. Significant CLPL opportunities have been offered to staff to focus on Covid recovery to support all children. These training sessions have been very well received with a high percentage of staff accessing these and implementing advice into their own settings.

A PT of Nurture was appointed to support the delivery of Trauma training and the development of Trauma Informed schools as part of our “Our Children Their Nurturing Education”. There is to be a new cohort of training which will focus on early year’s establishments.

Outdoor learning has been a key outcome on the Early Years annual plan and delivery of training has continued to take place throughout all areas. Our target of a minimum 50 percent of time being outdoors has been met and exceeded in 98 percent of all settings. This is providing a healthy learning environment, looking after physical wellbeing, re-establishing positive relationships and managing the change from learning at home to learning in ELC. Our Cluster Leads will continue to extend their training into the next academic year.

UHI Argyll and University of the Highlands and Islands

The academic year 2021/2022 has continued to be heavily impacted by Covid-19 with very little direct face to face teaching being possible. Courses with heavily practical elements were prioritised for access to college premises but theory classes were all delivered remotely using the college virtual learning environment and Webex platforms. This meant that the college had to ensure that all students had access to suitable IT equipment for this. More than 80 laptops were loaned out to students for the duration of their course, most of these were laptops purchased by the college using Scottish Digital Poverty fund and the college’s own resources for this. Unfortunately cheaper Chromebooks and tablets are not compatible with the different technologies used to deliver quality remote learning so the provision of reasonable spec laptops was essential. Connectivity issues were difficult to manage at times as the local infrastructure meant that dongles were often not effective either in areas where there was poor internet. Although most of the learning was carried out remotely teaching was still based around timetabled classes so that students could still link in and get an element of classroom experience.

Support staff continued to support students to access relevant funding – Bursary, EMA, Student Loan etc. and provided a lot of one to one help with this. Scottish Government provided Covid-19 support funds via SAAS and Scottish Funding Council to allow students and families to get more support where Covid-19 had caused additional hardship. At least 30 students were helped from these funds. Since March 2022 there has been a noticeable increase in students applying to the Hardship funds for support with cost of living increases. The rise in fuel price has been cited by students as the most common cause of further hardship. This situation looks likely to continue in the next academic session.

The College Counselling service has been more heavily used during 2021/ 22 than the previous year with 42 students benefitting from this service. 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 Togetherall 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. Learning Support has often been extremely effective for students when

delivered via Webex or other platforms, finding it more convenient to arrange support times, have quick “drop in” meetings etc.

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.

Over the last year all our centres have front line staff that have undergone Gender Based Violence awareness training and Scottish Mental Health First Aid training.

B. Increasing Income through Benefits

Flexible Food Fund

Launched on 11 January 2021 the Argyll and Bute Flexible Food Fund (FFF) uses funds provided by the Scottish Government to support people with financial insecurities to pay for food and fuel during these tough times. The fund provides a payment made to householders if they prove that they do not have the minimum income in their bank accounts to cover the costs of food and/or fuel for a month. Householders or claimants are then incentivised to engage with the advice agencies, Bute Advice Centre and ALLenergy, by securing a second monthly payment if there is evidence that they have taken advantage of these professional services to help them learn how to manage their financial situation in the medium to long term. Failure to engage with the service means that no further grant funded support is made to the claimant.

Householders or claimants are encouraged to make claims to the Flexible Food Fund online using an electronic form on the Council website however an alternative gateway is available through the Argyll and Bute Community Food Forum which involves all of the foodbanks in the area. This means that people regularly presenting at foodbanks for food packages are also getting referred to the FFF project where their needs for immediate support is assessed as is their overall circumstances. They are given the support they need to enable them to live on the resources that they are entitled to receive. Over 95% of householders or claims submitting a claim are engaging with the advice services.

- Advice services provide the following support:
- Money advice, money management and budgeting skills;
- Income or benefit maximisation;
- Debt advice;
- Fuel poverty advice including;
- Access to fuel vouchers;
- Debt relief;
- Warm home discounts;
- Home heating, efficiency measures, switching, support with appliances and the home heat fund.

At the end of April 2022, after just under 16 months there has been 1,007 families supported and the combined total client gain is £1.325 million meaning that the

average client gain per household is £1,315. In addition the team are managing a debt portfolio of £174,000 across all claimants where they continue to negotiate with creditors to reduce the arrears of individuals and families receiving support.

The project has received acclaim as being highly commended at the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV) for Excellence in Innovation. Between August 2021 and November 2021 a team of staff from the project travelled across Argyll and Bute promoting the project and networking with other key frontline staff in many of our most rural communities in order to provide additional support to those struggling the most. Bute Advice Centre (BAC) collaborated with IFAN and representatives from the Argyll & Bute Community Food Forum to create a leaflet that highlighted advice providers across the region. A section specifically highlights the Flexible Food Fund. These leaflets were distributed widely. Around 7000 have been provided to clients and support services through the roadshow.



The case studies below show the impact that this project is having in supporting people in Argyll and Bute.

Case Study 1 Family

A single parent in Helensburgh was able to secure a new job having been unemployed for some time. With young children to provide for she was very concerned about her finances and coming off Income Support after such a long time. The client was reassured and given support to claim UC. She was also advised of the need to claim separately for her council tax relief. She was surprised as she had always believed she claimed them together. Her adviser explained that the same system was not in operation under UC. This prevented council tax arrears accruing. The client was surprised at how much better off she was in work. She has yet to organise her childcare but when this happens her adviser will support her to access financial help. The FFF project has brought relief to a young mum who was worried about this big change in her life and the initial financial challenges.

Case Study 2

Client L is a woman who is currently unemployed and has been throughout Covid times since she is so extremely allergic to latex that she will have an extreme reaction if, for example, she is on public transport and another passenger at the other end of the bus/train carriage is wearing latex gloves. Her rented flat is centrally heated by old electric storage heaters. She has found these to be very expensive and ineffective so

she has them turned off and relies on her coal fire to heat the whole flat. She lives in fuel poverty i.e. she spends more than 10% of her benefit payments on electricity and struggles to afford food. She was, indeed, referred to Alienergy by the Bute Advice Centre who have helped her access the Flexible Food Fund run by the Argyll and Bute Council which awards food vouchers to those in need, i.e. a more anonymous version of a food bank. Initially when Alienergy contacted her, L assumed that we were cold-calling electricity suppliers and was brusque and dismissive and hung up prematurely. Alienergy persisted and were able to gain her confidence. L told Alienergy that she ate meals at friends' houses whenever she was invited on days when she had no money but she was afraid of the shame of asking them, ever, for a meal or telling them how poor she had become.

When L found she had no money at all, she correctly contacted her electricity supplier and told them and they froze her debt repayments until she had a bit more. Alienergy are registered with the Fuel Bank of Scotland and thus were able to apply to the Fuel Bank Heat Fund for a fully funded 50kg load of coal to help her through the winter. The Heat Fund organised delivery with of her normal smokeless coal preference with her normal local supplier and paid for it including the delivery charge which occurred within a few days. Alienergy also successfully applied for 3 x fuel vouchers worth £49 each to top up her electricity prepayment meter with credit to keep her from having to self-disconnect and live without power in her home in the depths of winter. Alienergy helped decipher somewhat confusing mail that L had received from her electricity supplier, give her general advice on her tariff type and changing to a competitive supplier options and advice on how to reduce her consumption with a few adjustments to her behaviour. New efficient appliances can help with reducing electricity consumption and Alienergy ascertained that of L's white-goods, her fridge-freezer was old, second hand and faulty to the point of being dangerous to health. With L's consent and cooperation, Alienergy made a successful application to Glasspool Trust who provided the funds for L to procure a new fridge/freezer and get it delivered and installed. L is very glad that Alienergy persisted in trying to contact her and said in an email: "Oh gosh thank you so much you're so helpful."

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 2021 to 31 March 2022 for the citizens of Argyll and Bute as **£10,165,000**.

Organisation	2021/2022 (£)
Bute Advice Centre	1,866,000
Argyll and Bute Council Welfare Rights	2,729,000
ACHA Welfare Rights	4,192,000
Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau	1,068,000
Alienergy	310,000
TOTAL	10,165,000

A book entitled “**Do You Have Money Worries**” has been produced and circulated widely; it contains a wealth of information on how to maximise income and deal with a host of issues and challenges created by the cost of living crisis.

C. Cost of Living

Housing

Affordable Housing

Often, a family's most significant monthly expense is their rent/mortgage; providing more affordable homes will alleviate a critical driver that pushes families into poverty. The first objective of the Local Housing Strategy is to provide an adequate supply of affordable homes. In 2021/22 there were 289 households with children under 16 rehoused via HOMEArgyll, out of a total of 733 RSL allocations, amounting to 39% of the total RSL allocations that year. In total this equates to 467 children rehoused in a permanent secure and affordable home.

There are 924 families with children under 16 on the HOMEArgyll waiting list as of April 2022, out of a total active waiting list of 2,991 (31%). This amounts to 1,766 children in total in housing need.

The housing strategy also 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 2020/21 only 13% of families on the HOMEArgyll housing waiting list required a three-bedroom property and less than 5% required 4 or more bedrooms.

Housing condition

Tackling housing in poor condition will improve children and young people's standard of living. Research suggests a relationship between poor housing and lower educational attainment, and if this is so, then the life chances of children and young people are affected. Hence, it affects the standard of living for children and young people at this time and reduces their standard of living as adults and or parents. The Council supports discretionary repair and improvement work as well as mandatory disabled adaptations to private sector properties via the Private Sector Housing Grant while housing associations carry out planned cyclical maintenance and improvement works on their stock and deliver necessary adaptations with investment from the Scottish Government, all of which can benefit local residents and property owners including those with young children to improve health and well-being and tackle poverty.

Link between housing age and fuel poverty

The age of a property has a significant impact on whether the household will be in fuel poverty. Fuel poor households and those in extreme fuel poverty are more likely to live in homes constructed pre-war rather than post war, as can be seen by the table below.

Table 1: Age and type of housing of those in fuel poverty

Fuel Poverty	% of LA	Age of Dwelling		House or Flat		Bedrooms	
		Pre-1945	Post 1945	House	Flat	1 or 2	3+
A&B	32%	33%	32%	29%	40%	42%	25%
Scotland	24%	26%	24%	21%	30%	29%	20%
Extreme Fuel Poverty							
A&B	19%	22%	18%	20%	17%	21%	18%
Scotland	12%	16%	10%	11%	13%	13%	11%

Source: SHCS- LA Analysis, 2017-19 (published 2021)

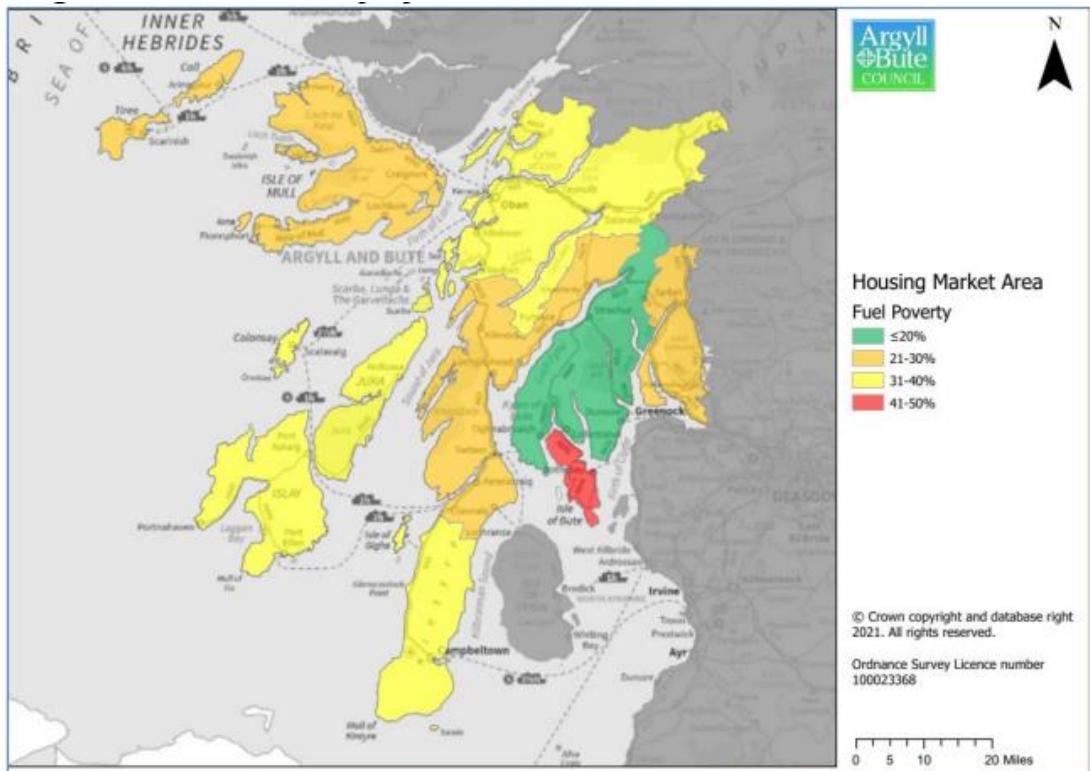
[Link between housing type and fuel poverty](#)

Table 1 shows that households in fuel poverty are also more likely to live in a flat (40%) compared to those who live in a house (29%). This is also the case nationally. Conversely, in Argyll and Bute those in extreme fuel poverty are more likely to live in a house.

[Link between housing location and fuel poverty](#)

Fuel poverty is not equally distributed throughout Argyll and Bute but rather more marked in some housing market areas. For example Figure 1 shows that Bute has 41-50% of the population in fuel poverty whereas Cowal has less than 20% in fuel poverty. Fuel poverty hot spots are in the islands, Kintyre and Oban and its hinterland. We will work in partnership to address fuel poverty and prioritise fuel poverty hot spot areas.

Figure 1:



Source: Home Analytics, 2021

Energy Efficiency and Affordable warmth

The Government has recently raised the Energy Price Cap, which has resulted in a sharp rise in energy costs adding hundreds and, in some cases, over a thousand pounds to a household's energy bill. These cost increases will push many families into poverty. Housing Services are working with partners to ensure that households reduce energy consumption to alleviate the spiralling costs of energy in their homes. The LHS outlines a series of actions to reduce energy consumption, such as:

Houses developed through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) will be energy-efficient new build homes. One of the Council and Scottish Government prioritisation criteria for awarding SHIP funding is that these affordable new build homes should be designed and built to Greener Standards. In this authority, Registered Social Landlords (RSL) pioneered the development of the innovative Passivhaus model of housing at Inellan in Cowal. Currently, another RSL is utilising SHIP funding to finance a new Passivhaus scheme in Garelochhead, which requires the home to have a 75% reduction in space heating requirements than a standard new build home. Several other energy efficiency measures and initiatives are being developed and piloted within SHIP new builds, such as district heating systems. There is a presumption that all future new builds delivered by the SHIP partnership will achieve these standards. However, new build homes only account for a small portion of housing stock.

Minimising all families' energy consumption will require existing homes to be retrofitted with measures to improve the fabric of the building and increase energy efficiency. Consequently, the building will require less energy to reach a comfortable

temperature. Reducing the heating demand in homes will contribute to lower heating bills and hence help to alleviate child poverty. The Local Housing Strategy outlines the tools and programmes to improve Argyll and Bute's energy efficiency. These are as follows;

The council has advocated taking a "fabric first approach", which ensures that the building's fabric is improved before insulation measures are installed. The insulation programme is financed by Home Energy Efficiency Programme Scotland: Area Based Scheme (HEEPS: ABS) 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. HEEPS: ABSs has invested almost £7.25m of energy efficiency measures in the local housing stock. Since 2017, 1,147 households have received insulation measures through the HEEPs ABS programme. Insulation measures make homes warmer while reducing energy bills.

RSLs have implemented the Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (ESSH) in most properties. In 2021 88% of properties were ESSH compliant. ESSH set out the minimum energy efficiency rating that social landlords were expected to achieve across their housing stock by 2020. Not all social housing stock can be made compliant with ESSH due to the building fabric, location, or mixed-tenure issues resulting in some exemptions or abeyances. The new ESSH2 proposals include further energy efficiency targets for social rented homes and incorporate a set of energy efficiency standards for Private Rented Sector (PRS) homes and owner-occupied homes.

Since 2020, Argyll and Bute Council has supported ACHA with their Warm Homes Project. £1million is funding external wall insulation to private homes in mixed tenure blocks. This supports ACHA's broader programme where they are installing over 1,000 air source heat pumps across Argyll and Bute. ACHA has also secured Scottish Government Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding to pilot a demonstrator project.

Installing renewable energy solutions is another lever that can reduce energy consumption. The council is currently working with HIE, Scottish Government and the local community on Islay to explore feasible options and scenarios that would assist in delivering local energy networks on the island to overcome grid capacity challenges. Additionally, there is a proposed Heat Network project in Iona, and both projects would aim to reduce energy costs and take some of the burdens from family finances. Registered Social Landlords are installing heat pumps to reduce the amount of energy used by households to heat their homes.

Energy efficiency measures are essential to keep homes warm with minimal energy usage, reducing most energy bills and reducing families' financial burden. However, when households move from gas heating systems to electrical heating systems used by heat pumps, this can increase bills due to 1KWh of electricity being more expensive than 1 kWh of gas. To avoid this effect will require action at the Governmental level to reduce the price of electricity relative to gas which could be achieved by axing the "Green Levy" on electricity. Improving energy efficiency and providing affordable homes will address some of families' most significant expenses and the drivers of child poverty.

Housing vulnerable families who are more likely to be in poverty

The Local Housing Strategy recognises that children and families in particular situations are more likely to experience poverty, and hence the LHS outlines a series of actions to address disadvantage and alleviate poverty, such as:

Preventing families and young people from becoming homeless. The housing options service assists families and individual young people aged 16-18 to identify the type of home they need and can afford, which reduces the number of failed tenancies, thus ensuring more tenants can remain in their homes. This preventative work reduces incidences of homelessness which contributes to reducing child poverty.

There was a significant decline in the number of homeless children in Argyll and Bute over the last five years 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 in total) and 87 of these households received a positive outcome.

ALlenergy

Fuel Poverty

The current crisis of fuel poverty and cost of living is worse in the rural north west of Scotland than anywhere else in the UK. There are reasons why fuel poverty levels are particularly high: there is typically a dispersed population and poor infrastructure; we have elderly demographics, low incomes, poorly insulated housing and bad weather; the pandemic hit people hard, because there is normally a heavy reliance on tourism; and crucially, there is a lack of mains gas, so people are forced to use more expensive heating options. Electric heating is typically 3-4 times as expensive as gas heating, but many households across Argyll and Bute have no choice but to use it.

Regional statistics for fuel poverty in Scotland from the Scottish House Condition Survey show that in 2019, before Covid-19, fuel poverty already affected about one in three households in Argyll and Bute, and one in five were in extreme fuel poverty. Recently, revised Scottish Government figures show that fuel poverty is now estimated to be 43% higher than in 2019. This means that in the Argyll & Bute and Highland regions, fuel poverty is likely to be approaching 50% and extreme fuel poverty, probably almost 30% of all households – and further significant price increases seem likely yet to come. Enhanced media coverage has heightened awareness of the appalling and widespread nature of the challenge facing rural Scotland: many more households are now finding themselves in an increasingly desperate situation, many are self-rationing to the extent that they are seriously risking their health and wellbeing – and/or becoming deeply indebted to their energy suppliers in order to keep warm. Argyll, Lomond and the Islands Energy Agency (ALlenergy) has been working to alleviate fuel poverty in Argyll and Bute for over 20 years.

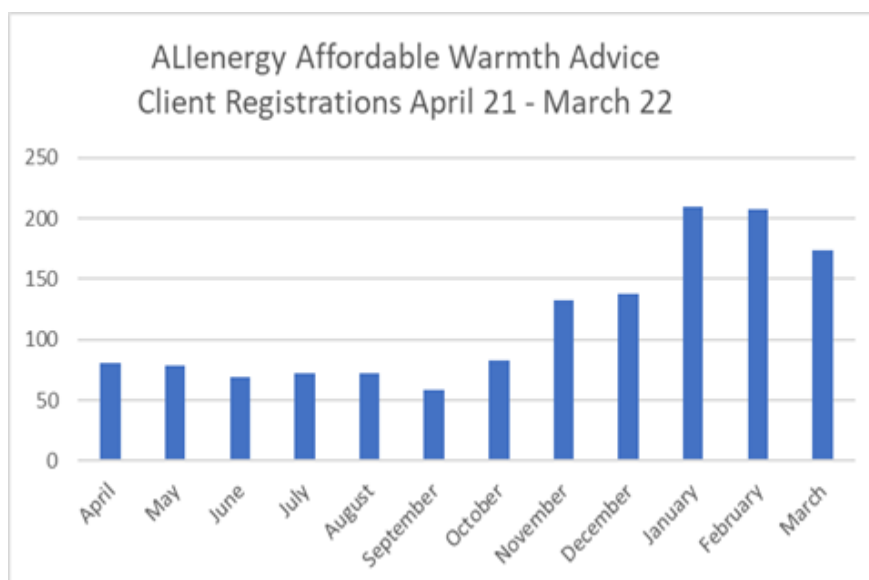
ALlenergy's advisors offer in-depth advice and support, typically involving several sessions working with the client, and sometimes also with their support worker or

carer, or other referral partners, over a period of several weeks/months. This involves a dual approach, first to identify and access any available immediate and urgently required financial assistance to pay bills or clear debts, or to provide emergency prepayment meter vouchers, fuel deliveries, or any essential electrical appliances that are missing or broken – and then to support ongoing resilience through a range of advice topics including using home heating and appliances more efficiently; helping to understand energy bills and meter readings; discussing options for suppliers, tariffs and meter types; setting up online accounts; addressing damp and condensation issues; and helping to access the Scottish Government funded heating replacements and insulation schemes through Home Energy Scotland. Allenergy also provides a range of advice leaflets and also small useful ‘cosy kit’ household items to help people to keep warm, such as blankets, socks and hot water bottles.

Beneficiaries are typically vulnerable or disadvantaged for reasons such as low income, poor health, disability, unemployment, single parent households and the elderly. However, recent price rises have been so severe that many households that would not normally be described as particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged, are now finding themselves struggling for the first time, unable to afford to heat their homes adequately, and having to choose between eating and heating. Fuel poverty is associated with multiple deprivations: poor health, loneliness and isolation, poor educational outcomes, low employability and debt, and ultimately, shockingly, loss of life through excess winter deaths.

Allenergy takes direct client enquiries and also works closely with a range of other organisations including Home Energy Scotland, food banks, housing associations, advice agencies, health and social care professionals and other charities, all of which commonly encounter clients in fuel poverty and refer clients. This is an extremely effective method to engage with otherwise hard-to-reach client groups, who might not otherwise come forward.

Allenergy had 1237 clients registering in the year Apr21 – Mar22 with a significant increase over the winter months as prices went up and the weather became colder.



Immediate financial gains measured by Allenergy in 2021-22

ALlenergy is a registered referral partner with Fuel Bank Foundation. Through the Fuel Bank Foundation, prepayment meter vouchers and bulk heating fuel deliveries can be accessed. In the period April 21 – March 22, 773 prepayment meter vouchers were accessed to a total value of £33,108, supporting 950 adults and 597 children in Argyll and Bute, whose households were close to or already using the emergency credit facility on their electric and/or gas meter, or had already self-disconnected. 36 bulk heating fuel deliveries (oil, coal, firewood) were also secured worth around £9,000 in total, direct to households who could not afford heating fuel deliveries.

ALlenergy is a registered referral partner for the Scottish Government Home Heating Support Fund – this scheme provides financial relief for energy debt and ongoing costs to energy consumers who are experiencing significant financial hardship regardless of the fuel or payment method used. This year's scheme opened in January 22 and by 31/3/22 we secured 54 awards totalling £47,390 in debt write off and contributions to ongoing costs.

ALlenergy is a registered partner of the Glasspool Trust, allowing access to funding for free white goods (cookers, washing machines, fridges, freezers) for low income households where an essential electrical appliance is missing, faulty, or very old and energy inefficient. 67 free appliances were successfully applied for from the Glasspool charity in the year March 21 – April 22, worth £20,808 in total, to households where essential appliances were broken, missing, or very old and energy inefficient.

Since October 21, ALlenergy has been able to access some financial assistance for clients from Argyll and Bute Council's Flexible Fund, and awards have been made to 71 households in Argyll and Bute to the end of March, totalling £18,988, towards energy debt relief and ongoing costs.

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.

By the end of 2022, the Scottish Government's package of five family benefits for low income families, administered by Social Security Scotland, will be worth up to a maximum of over £10,000 by the time a family's first child turns 6 – 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 twelve benefits, seven of which are brand new. The benefits include:

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.

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 6 months for families who get certain benefits. This goes up to 1 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 for any subsequent child.

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

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 3 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 £80 every four weeks to eligible families and carers to help towards the costs of looking after each child under 6. 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 affects your everyday life. This benefit is currently live in 3 pilot areas in Scotland and will be available in Argyll and Bute from 29th August 2022.

Coming up

Subject to parliamentary approval, Scottish Child Payment will extend to under 16 year olds and rise by a further £5 to £25 per week, per child, later in 2022. By that point around 430,000 children living in low income households could be eligible – a fourfold increase on the 104,000 children we are already helping.

At this point the Best Start Early Learning Payment and Best Start School Age Payment will be paid automatically to parents and carers receiving Scottish Child Payment when their child becomes eligible.

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

FIAG (financial inclusion and Advice Group);
Child Poverty Action Group;
All our Children Group;
Carers Centres;
Early Years including nurseries;
Schools;
Midwives and Health Visitors;
Child Health and CAMHS;
Skills Development Scotland;
Employability;
Living Well Networks;
Welfare Rights staff;
Housing Associations;
Home Energy organisations;
Health and Social Care Partnership; Health Improvement staff.

Free School Meals and Holiday Provision



Since the last Action Plan Update, 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. In preparation for forthcoming roll out of free breakfasts, a survey is being undertaken to map the current breakfast provision across all schools in Argyll and Bute.

National work has been undertaken between ASSIST FM and SPIRU to better understand the decisions made by and opinions of secondary school pupils at lunchtime. A survey was undertaken which over 15,000 pupils in Scotland responded to, and four Secondary Schools in Argyll and Bute received bespoke, school-specific reports on the views of their pupils, so that decisions can be made around provision based on pupil feedback.

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.

Free school meal uptake remains higher than the Scottish average, though it has been affected by changes to services due to schools utilising their dining halls and other spaces differently during the pandemic. Most schools are now returning their lunch service to pre-pandemic provision.

In line with Scottish Government funding requirements, a programme of holiday food and activities took place during summer 2021, and plans are developing for provision during summer 2022.

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.

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.

Argyll and Bute Community Food Forum



The Argyll and Bute Community Food Forum continues to operate as a mutual support service for food banks across Argyll and Bute. Bute Advice Service provides the coordination role, bringing the forum together as a collective of independent organisations. The Council supports the initiative which is a network through which existing independent food-banks, food waste and community food initiatives can share experience, advice and ideas. Their work is closely linked to the Council's Cost of Living and financial inclusion work, and officers meet with representatives of the Community Food Forum on a regular basis, providing support as required.

Argyll and Bute Council are represented on the Scottish Government's Working Group tasked with developing ways of ending the need for Food Banks in Scotland.

Foodbank	Information
Kintyre Foodbank	Kintyre Food Bank opens Tuesdays and Fridays from 10.30 - 11.30 or till all clients have been dealt with. We gave out 271 parcels of about 4 carrier bags. depending on the number of people in the families, sometimes considerably more, during 21st April -22 March We had 54 families. We are noticing a huge increase in the number of clients over the last 2-3 months. The main problems families had was that the benefits they received was not enough to cover food, heat, school uniforms, clothes, shoes etc.

	<p>The food given by the council during holidays did help but quite often it was not appropriate. The main issues facing the food bank last year was the constant need to fund raise, volunteer numbers went down as people were either shielding or recovering from Covid-19. It is very distressing for us to witness the anxiety clients feel that benefits don't cover their needs.</p>
Bute Oasis	<p>Food bank is open 10-4 each day. Numbers have doubled in the last few months from on average 80 households per month to now 160 households. 75% are families; the remaining 25% are single individuals, equally shared across the sexes. The rise in 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 is able to support rising numbers and provided over 100 households Xmas 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.</p>
Hope Kitchen	<p>Hope Kitchen support the Mull and Iona food bank, therefore stats include both foodbanks. In the period April 2021-Mar 22 1271 food parcels were given out supporting on average 105 household each month. In April of last year 102 families were supported compared to 155 in March of this year, indicating a rise in the number of households struggling. Where the reasons for using the service is usually recorded as low benefits or low income, a rising number of recipients are giving unexpected bills as their reason for using the service due to the increase in fuel bills. On average around 300 Xmas hampers are provided to families to support them at this pinch point. A concern is the dropping number of contributions as households have less to share with the community as they face their own rising food and fuel bills.</p>
Tarbert Pantry	<p>Food hampers are given to an average of 50 families each week. Supplies are also given to the Multiple Sclerosis support service. Should anyone be in need support can be offered that day. As the cost of living bites deeper many households are struggling to manage on their restricted budgets and need support.</p>
Helensburgh & Roseneath Food Bank	<p>Helensburgh & Lomond food bank serves those living within the Helensburgh and Lomond Council Area boundary. We are an independent community Foodbank run entirely by unpaid volunteers and the majority of food distributed is donated by the local community. We operate on a drop-in no referral necessary basis. We are located at the Helensburgh Community Hub where we have a donation drop off point and storage area.</p> <p>We are open for clients on a Monday from 10.00am until 12.00 and Thursday from 3pm until 8pm. We provide an outreach Foodbank at the Howie Pavilion Rosneath on a Wednesday from 1pm until 3pm.</p>

	<p>During the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 we issued 2427 bags of food. Each bag provides a nutritionally balanced diet for an individual or family for 1 week. We provide fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese, eggs and bread as well as a selection of non-perishable food items. The estimated cost of each bag £37.98p. We also include a toiletry such as soap or toothpaste as well as a toilet roll in each bag.</p> <p>Many of those who attend are single householders we do not collect specific data on the number of families attending. During the reporting period we supported 2940 adults and 823 children. A total of 3763 were supported by the food bags provided.</p> <p>The primary problem facing families is low income making it impossible to cope with food inflation, debt and high home heating and energy costs. The loss of the £20 Universal Credit uplift in October was particularly difficult for many. Since this was withdrawn we have seen an increase in demand which is on-going. We are seeing a marked increase in requests for help with home energy costs. Many are at risk of self-disconnection as they have no money to top up their prepayment key/cards. This trend is likely to increase in the autumn.</p> <p>The main issue facing food banks is sustainability given the increase in demand and likelihood of this upward trend in demand continuing.</p> <p>We compared the number of Bags Issued in the month March 2019 (pre-Covid-19) 170 bags with the number Issued in March 2022 it had increased to 260. An increase of 52.9%. A 6% increase in the cost of food and the high cost of home energy will drive even more children into poverty. We are also seeing a drop in donations as those who donate to the Foodbank are also seeing an increase in their own living costs. We are having to purchase additional food weekly to provide a well-balanced bag of food for all who request help. In common with Foodbanks across the country this additional demand is stretching the resources and good will of those who donate, manage and volunteer at foodbanks.</p> <p>We are grateful for the financial support for clients made available via the Argyll & Bute Flexible Food Fund. Being able to signpost clients to Bute Advice for a Benefits Review and Alienergy for help with home energy is very helpful. We also see the positive benefit of providing cash first options for people via FFF and the school holiday lunch payments. These initiatives afford families the dignity of choosing and buying their own food ensuring it meets their personal and cultural preferences. Previously we had to provide additional food for children during the school holidays since the introduction of the school holiday payment this has not been necessary.</p>
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Moving On Mid-Argyll	Before April 2022 an average of 2/3 families would be supported each week, since then this has increased to some weeks there are 8 households. As the cost of living increases a rise in client need is anticipated. Client can call directly or be referred in to the project for support.
Solar Tiree Foodbank	Food bank Opening Days and Times: by appointment, but visit on Sunday afternoons Allocations of Food from April 21-Mar22: frozen food surplus from the Coop and around £3000 in Coop vouchers No of families supported 8 Primary problems facing families with children: Currently travel off the island Has the lunch support from A & B Council over the holidays had an impact on families (if you are aware): Yes, it was very helpful Main issues facing the foodbank in the last year: making contact with potential clients and fundraising
Dunoon foodbank	Food bank Opening Days and Times Thursday 4.30-6pm, Friday 10-12noon, Other times by arrangement. Allocations of Food from April 21-Mar22 2500 food parcels; 1800 take away meals. No of families supported - 230 different clients. Primary problems facing families with children; School holidays, meals and endless snacks. Has the lunch support from A & B Council over the holidays had an impact on families (if you are aware); It has helped Main issues facing the foodbank in the last year; Food supplies with supermarket shortages and restrictions on buying. Higher expectations - meals for 5 rather than 3 days; Premises restrictions
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	Food bank Opening Days and Times - n/a We deliver in response to email/texts/calls. Allocations of Food from April 21-Mar22 - 32 households received parcels (most of them multiple occasions); 64 individuals including 10 children. No of families supported -1 (5 parcels delivered over the year).

	<p>Primary problems facing families with children - separated father struggling when he has his two boys staying; reduction in Universal Credit stated as tipping point.</p> <p>Has the lunch support from A & B Council over the holidays had an impact on families (if you are aware) - not known</p> <p>Main issues facing the foodbank in the last year - getting people to use it; we know the need is there, but in a small community people are reluctant to admit need.</p>
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Good Food Nation and Food Strategy

The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill is currently at stage two in the Parliamentary process, and work has been underway over the past 12 months to ensure that the Bill is designed to create a more sustainable food system for everyone in Scotland. Key strands of the Bill are expected to deliver or support:

A requirement for all Local Authorities and Health Boards to produce Local Food Action Plans

National and Local Governments and Health Boards will need to write and consult on plans every 5 years

Food insecurity is recognised, with a right to food either enshrined in this legislation or clearly linked to other legislation to ensure that food produced in Scotland is sustainable

A number of targets and designated functions should be identified

Public Sector food is clearly identified as a driver for systemic change, and over the past year, officers have been actively involved in discussions around the Bill and its implementation, with the Council's Executive Leadership Team up to date on the current progress. Officers have given evidence and shaped the recommendations of the Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee, thus ensuring that the needs of rural communities are considered. Officers have also presented at the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on Food about the impact that the Bill will have on Local authorities and Health Boards, and attended the Day of Action for the Good Food Nation Bill.

It is expected that this Bill will become law during the course of 2022.

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 have been assisting in the development of this work, and have responded to the consultation.

With both of these legal requirements expected in the coming year, since January 2022 Commercial Services, Economic Development and Highlands and Islands Enterprise have been working with a local consultant to develop the first ever Argyll and Bute Food and Drink Strategy, with food insecurity, community wealth building



and public sector food being key components of that paper. This Strategy will be published shortly.

[Bute Advice Service](#)

Bute Advice Centre staff and committee have been working extremely hard for communities across Argyll and Bute in the last year. Throughout the COVID pandemic staff have worked from home, offering a comprehensive telephone service with regards to Welfare Rights. Staff have also supported clients who have been facing financial difficulties with debt. Staff remain motivated to deliver our mission statement with the intention of “relieving poverty and distress”.

[Argyll Community Housing Association Welfare Rights Service](#)

Bute Advice Centre is very proud to be responsible for the welfare rights arm of ACHA in the Bute & Cowal region which supports tenants to maintain their tenancies through welfare rights provision. ACHA was able to tap into fuel vouchers for tenants through the Housing Association Charitable Trust. In the last financial year (Apr 21-Mar 22) the client gain across all 4 ACHA regions was £4million+. BAC staff work very closely with local ACHA teams to target particular vulnerable groups who may need support, e.g. supporting those of pensionable age to access pension credits. Each week BAC staff meet with area staff from Lomond, Oban & Lorne and the Isles, and Mid Argyll & Kintyre, where updates on welfare reform issues are discussed and face-book posts are created to keep tenants up to date with changes.

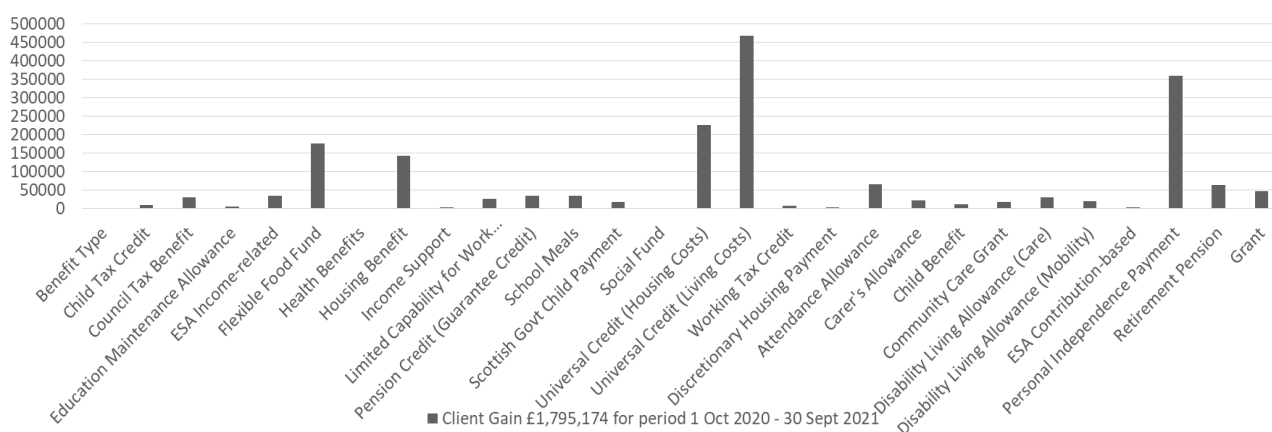
Syrian Refugee Project

Bute Advice Centre staff have worked closely over the last 6 years with families who have come from Syria to make a new life on Bute. For some families it was a place to set down roots and make a home, for others it was a safe stepping stone to move on with their lives to other places. Staff are responsible for delivering all welfare rights and money advice services to the families, with scheduled appointments every month. As families arrive an intense support package is offered, reducing as they settle in and no longer need the same level of help.

Advice Book

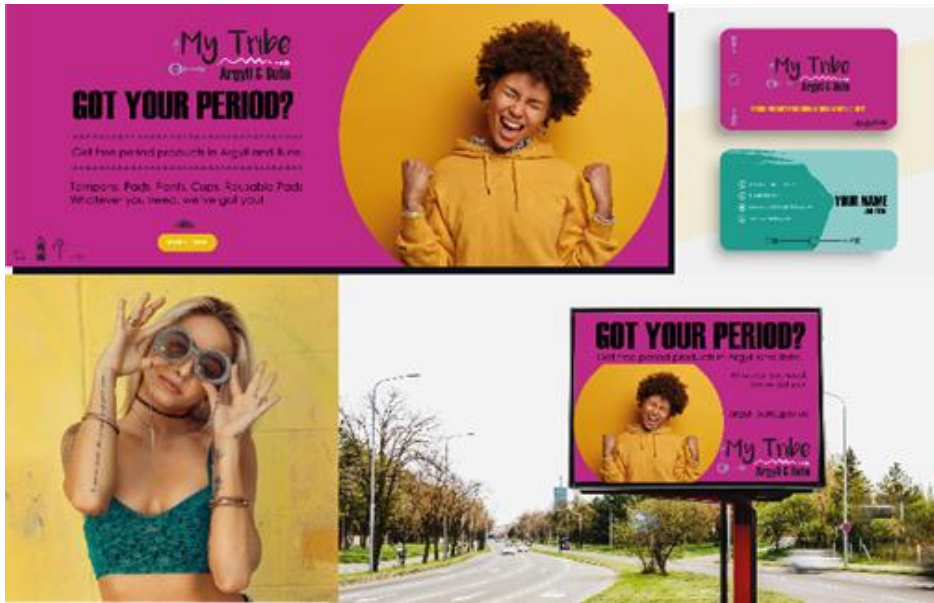
In May 2022 a small book with advice and information around welfare rights, money advice and energy advice was distributed across the region to support those struggling on tight budgets. Priority was given to those using foodbanks.

Client Gain £1,865,725 for period 1 April 2021 – 31 Mar 2022 Across All Projects

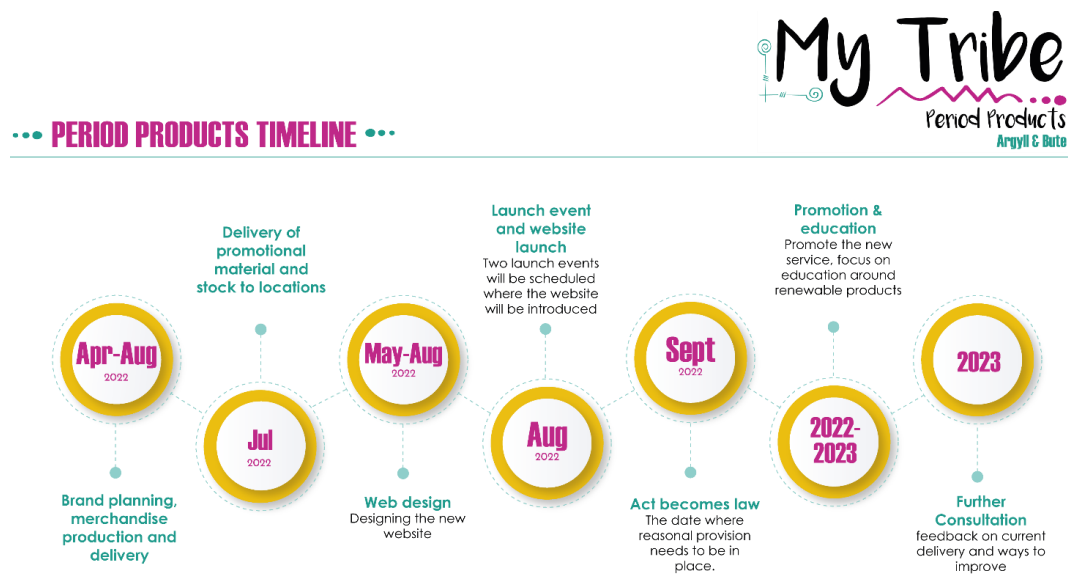


Free Period Products

In November 2021, Argyll and Bute Council appointed a Project Lead – Period Products to ensure that the consultation, launch, roll out and compliance required by the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 was achieved. Argyll and Bute is the first Local Authority area to specifically recruit a post to support this work. During the early part of 2021, the post holder undertook considerable consultation to develop a Statement on Exercise of Functions, a brand identity and a provision and launch plan, with consultation being done with both young people and adults across communities.



Work is underway to ensure that the new statutory duty will be achieved by 15th August 2022, with a timeline as follows:



Products remain available in a range of public buildings as identified on the Pick Up My Period App, as well as continuing to be available online:

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

It is interesting to note that over the past 12 months, more reusable products have been provided to people in Argyll and Bute than disposable products, which is in line with the original sustainability aspirations of the project.

School Clothing Banks

We have great engagement between schools and community groups in Campbeltown where the Council is working with the schools, Kintyre Recycling Limited Shopper Aide to implement a school clothing bank to cover 6 primary schools and a secondary school in South Kintyre.

There has been positive engagement in both Dunoon and Rothesay and it is anticipated that Sustainable Use School Clothing Banks will be setup by June 2022 in all of these areas.

The GRAB Trust (Group for Recycling in Argyll and Bute)

The GRAB Trust are offering free 'sew your own' period pad workshops. These are to be held monthly across Argyll to support and enable communities to take control of their own cycle by providing information and practical skills to sew their own reusable period pad, using refurbished sewing machines. There will also be opportunities at each workshop to learn more about reusable period products and how they can benefit their health, the environment and finances.

ReStyle Argyll

ReStyle Argyll is a collaboration of four partners to bring quality re-used furniture to all areas of Argyll & Bute. They offer a collection service for donated household furniture and white goods. ReStyle Argyll have a Zero Waste ethos, items that need major repairs or refurbishment will be sent to a ReUse & RePair Hub. **ReStyle Bute, 100 Montague Street, Rothesay, Isle of Bute**

The objectives of this social enterprise are to:

- Improve environmental sustainability
- Support training, skills development and relieve unemployment
- Fyne Futures operate a number of activities including:
- Recycling (kerbside and bring site collections, processing and onward sale to market)
- Car Club (providing affordable and sustainable access to vehicles for individual and corporate members)
- Bute Produce (affordable fruit and vegetables, training in horticulture and heritage varieties)
- Restyle (collection of unwanted furniture and sale of affordable reuse furniture, with local delivery)

LORI, Oban, Moleigh Recycling Site, Ariogan, Oban, Argyll

Lorn and Oban Reuse Initiative (LORI) opened to the public in 2009, now part of The GRAB Trust, whose aims are to:

- Divert and reuse furniture and other household objects before they reach the waste stream.

- Provide volunteer job and training opportunities for the long-term unemployed and community service offenders.
- Provide low cost furniture to the homeless to furnish their new property at 50% discount on normal prices.

Kintyre Recycling, 67 Glebe Street, Campbeltown, Argyll

Kintyre Recycling Limited provides recycling services to the Kintyre peninsula. By operating as a social enterprise, Kintyre Recycling provides employment to people with special/social needs and learning disabilities.

Kintyre Recycling has two main objectives:

- To provide employment to persons with special needs and learning difficulties.
- To provide waste management services and access recycling facilities to a disadvantaged area in Argyll + Bute by operating as a social firm.

Re-Jig, Unit 11, Whin Park, Bridgend, Isle of Islay

The core objectives of the company are:

- to reduce landfill on Islay and Jura,
- to protect the natural environment,
- to reuse as much resource as possible
- to create long term employment in the local community.

ReStyle Argyll supports development in skills for volunteers, work-based trainees and seeks to create sustainable employment.

D. Helping Families in Other Ways

Infant and Perinatal Mental Health Services

The infant and perinatal mental health service has been developing since late 2021. We now have a Perinatal Mental Health Nurse and Parenting and infant Mental Health therapist in post, supported by "champions " in Health and 3rd sector, who are assisting in raising awareness and doing training across the HSCP. See below from most recent progress report

"PNMH & IMH will work together around families and community. Perinatal Mental Health (PNMH) nurse led team will accept referrals directly from primary care, maternity and health visiting professionals, as well as other mental health services including Community mental health and Crisis teams. Relationships and support will be developed with the north of Scotland PNMH leadership resource. The service will continue to work with colleagues in the Levenale MBU and regional support once in place.

The service is built on the foundations of Children and Families in Argyll and Bute which brings together the core universal services of Maternity and Health visiting around the child .GIRFEC is well embedded in the family pathway and services are integrated around the family in their community. All women have a primary midwife

and continuity of carer is above 75%. There are close links with the CMHT and social work with local support from addictions in localities. Primary mental health teams are linked to services and electronic CBT and text base service are promoted (silvercloud).

Face to face and virtual parenting groups exist and one to one care is provide with TEC available to support. There are two nurturing and parenting support workers currently being developed into roles to support early intervention. Regular clinical supervision is undertaken across the HSCP using teams. A strength based approach to care starts with the wellbeing tool in the antenatal period within the wider GIRFEC family pathway.

The Service objectives are to develop:

- *Capacity to assess and case manage women with new or pre-existing moderate to severe mental illness occurring in the perinatal period;*
- *Pre-conception assessment service;*
- *Assessment and facilitation of mother-infant relationship in context of maternal mental illness liaison to maternity services.*

Maternity Teams have attended "Money Counts" training run by A&B Council to develop a broader understanding of services available and how to refer and access. Maternity Services have remained an essential service throughout the pandemic so this has ensured support, advocacy and continuity for our families in A&B.

Youth Work Education Recovery Learning Programme

The Community Learning Service is listening to Young People and their concerns around returning to school/education during COVID-19 and the impact this was having on their health and well-being. We successfully accessed funding from the Youthwork Education Recovery fund to provide activities that enabled us to address some of these issues and to support young people to return to or remain engaged in their education and learning provision.

Youth workers have been able to provide youth work and outdoor learning in 8 of the 10 high schools in Argyll. 1 other high school had the outdoor learning element of the project, this was due to Covid restrictions on travelling to Island communities. This funding provided the opportunity for coordinated youth work support across Argyll. The support was targeted and worked with those young people schools had most concerns about due to the impact of Covid. At least 90%of the young people participating weren't known to the Youth workers and this has led to increased youth work support for them as well as supportive relationships with new peer groups. The Youthwork partnership with Hebridean Pursuits gave 99 young people the opportunity to use outdoor learning as a way to explore their Health and Wellbeing as well as build on current or news skills. Most young people will have accessed outdoor learning previously, however rarely, with youth work support, this has enabled transferring of skills and learning across context's including school and family life. Different outdoor learning experiences offered opportunities for personal and learning skills development in areas such as communication, problem solving, and information technology, working with others and thinking skills.

Key outcomes

- 99 young people participated in the programme.
- Awards/accredited qualifications gained included 45 SQA Health and Wellbeing, 23 Dynamic Youth Awards and 14 Hi5 awards.
- Key stakeholders have identified increased confidence and skills in participants. They have seen improved health and wellbeing and an awareness of and ability to seek support where required.
- Evidence of increased attendance at school, positive engagement with learning and with peers in school and at home.
- Increased attainment through recognition of wider learning and achievement.
- Outcome star was used to monitor learner's journeys in key areas, the figures below show percentage of learners who reported progress:

47% - making a difference

46% - Hopes and Dreams

80% -Wellbeing

53% - Education

40% choices and behaviour

47% in 3+ outcome areas

93% in 2+ outcome areas

100% 1+outcome areas 2.9 average number of areas showing progress

82.8% achieved accredited qualification

Youth Voice/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. We have a number of initiatives we will be supporting this year including.

Scottish Youth Parliament

We are supporting our 3 newly elected Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament to represent Argyll and Bute's young people at the Scottish Youth Parliament and on local strategic forums including the Community Planning Partnership. The MSYP will be conducting an Argyll wide roadshow to engage/consult with young people to identify their priorities and to represent these views locally and nationally.

Youth Action Groups (YAG)

After a youth led consultation we are relaunching/rebranding the youth forums to become Youth Action Groups. We are supporting the development of 6 YAG across Argyll.

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 will be running a training programme twice this year for 120 young people. They will attend a training weekend at Ardroy Outdoor Centre where the local Members of the Scottish Youth parliament along with Youth workers will provide Youth Participation Training.

Northern Alliance/Argyll and Bute's Children Committee

We are supporting young people to lead and participate in the Regional Improvement Collaborative Youth Advisory Group and Argyll and Bute Children's Youth Advisory Panel. MSYP are involved in both of these forums and continue to influence their priorities for supporting young people in Argyll and Bute and across the 8 Local Authorities in the Northern Alliance.

What are Carers Centres and MAYDS doing to support Young Carers in Argyll & Bute?

Just over 500 young carers are currently being supported by Carers Centres in Cowal & Bute, Helensburgh & Lomond and North Argyll, whilst Mid Argyll Youth Development Service (MAYDS) offers educational and recreational services to young people in Mid Argyll.

Young Carers services provide support to unpaid young carers and their families from the age of 5 (with the exception of North Argyll who support young carers from 8 years).

Carers Centres & MAYDS are contracted by Argyll & Bute HSCP to undertake Young Carers Statements under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 on behalf of Argyll & Bute HSCP. This helps to identify how Young Carers feel about their caring roles, what young carers are doing in their caring roles and what support they need.

Carers Centres and MAYDS apply for charitable funding through organisations such as; The BIG Lottery, Comic Relief, Children in Need, Robertson Trust, Shared Care Scotland and the Army Covenant to provide a break from caring and support for young carers. In addition Carers Centres and MAYDS take opportunities to maximise their funding through charitable and community grants providing young carers with therapy and counselling, vouchers for activities, assistance and help towards food and fuel costs and other items.

Each Carers Centre and MAYDS are slightly different but may provide the following supports and services:

Young Carers Statements	Emergency Planning	Advocacy
Therapy/Counselling	After School Groups	School Drop ins
Homework Clubs	Signposting/Referrals	Saturday Activities
Holiday Activities	Trips	Residential
One to one support	Training & Information	

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, Carers Centres and MAYDS provided Young Carers and their families with help in accessing food and prescriptions, Young Carers and their siblings were delivered activity packs, provided with laptops, iPads and tablets to maintain contact with peers, supports and access education.

A number of Young Carers and families were given supermarket vouchers, electricity top up and help towards living costs. This period meant Carers Centres and MAYDS adapted to providing Young Carers with a break from caring in a different way, moving from school support, physical groups and activities. Support was provided by telephone, online group sessions and one to one's, and doorstep visits.

Activity packs, games, equipment (indoor and outdoor) and a range of items – were sourced to provide Young Carers with an alternative break from caring. As lockdown restrictions eased, Young Carers where identified, were provided with therapy and counselling responding to individual need.

As a result of funding sourced by the Carers Centres and MAYDS during the Pandemic, a number of Young Carers and their families were provided with various items, for example; TV's, Games Consoles, Cookers, Sewing Machines, Garden Sheds, as well as, shopping vouchers and assistance with fuel costs. Centres are aware of families that are continuing to struggle and are helping to meet this need alongside signposting to appropriate partners.

[Transforming Responses to Violence against Women and Girls](#)

In September 2021 the Argyll and Bute Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership gained £68,857 from the Developing Equally Safe Fund for a Project aimed at transforming the responses to violence against women and girls. This will run over a two year period and take the form of a number of training and service development events that will improve services to women, and other victims, of domestic abuse. Staff skills and confidence will be improved through the delivery of training such as Routine Enquiry, Working with Men and Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising. In addition a research project will be carried out to capture the views and ideas of lived experience women and of staff.

A major part of this project will be the start of a roll out of the Safe and Together Model across Argyll and Bute. The aim of this is to improve practice and create better outcomes for children and families exposed to domestic violence. Key principles of the model are:

1. Keeping safe and together with the non-offending parent (safety / healing from trauma / stability and nurturance).
2. Partnering with non-offending parent as de-fault position (efficient / effective / child centred).
3. Intervening with perpetrator to reduce risk and harm to the child (engagement / accountability / courts).

For more information go to <https://safeandtogetherinstitute.com>

It is hoped that these changes in services will help to keep children out of care and with the non-offending partner. These changes marry up well with the whole family approach of The Promise and offer supports that will benefit children and families.

Free School Meals Delivered by Drones

Pupils in remote parts of Argyll and Bute could soon have their school meals delivered by drone. In a UK first, Argyll and Bute Council is teaming up with leading drone specialists Skyports to trial the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) in delivering school meals. Flying from Oban Airport, the trial involves delivering meals freshly prepared in Park Primary School in Oban to Lochnell Primary, which is 1.5km away.

Argyll and Bute is Scotland's second largest local authority with 23 inhabited islands, the most of any UK authority. While the majority of schools have kitchens on site preparing meals, the provision of school meals to some rural and remote schools currently relies on traditional methods of transport including vans, taxis and ferries, which can be affected weather conditions.

The use of drones would help the council to deliver meals to all remote and island schools reducing current delivery times and costs, and help contingency planning in emergencies. The drones also offer an alternative carbon free mode of transport, as they are fully electric. The trials are part of plans for the council to create an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Innovations logistics Hub at Oban Airport. The council received £170,000 of UK Government Community Renewal funding to create a detailed planning application with full design and costings in order to bid to the UK Levelling Up Fund. New funding will enable the construction of the hub by March 2025.

Universal Pathway Quality Improvement Collaborative Financial Inclusion Practicum (UPQIC)

Background - In our last review we informed that In October 2019, teams, consisting of money advisors and Health Visitors from across Scotland came together to work with Improvement Advisors from the 'Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative'. The aim was to implement or improve the processes already in place in relation to financial inclusion discussions between Health Visitors and families as part of the Universal Health Visiting Pathway, referring them for financial advice where required. The project originally commenced in October 2019 and was due to finish in 2020 however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the project was put on hold until January 2021, when work was able to re start. The team from Argyll and Bute consists of 2 Health Visitors from Bute and Cowal, and Bute Advice Service. They have developed a referral pathway between the services, where Health Visitors refer families directly to Bute Advice for further advice and support.

Project Aim: ‘By September 2021, Health Visitors in Argyll and Bute (Bute & Cowal), will have a financial discussion with parents at 80% of contacts on the Health Visiting Pathway, and where a need is identified 100% will receive the requested money advice and benefit support’. From January – May 2021 in conjunction with Bute Advice Centre the Health Visitors in Bute developed a financial referral pathway which allows them to directly refer families with ‘money worries’ into the local money advice service (Bute Advice). This has provided a single point of contact for families to a money advice service. Client financial gain has been significant having been supported through access to The Flexible Food fund and ALLenergy.

It was hoped that by 2022 the Financial Referral Pathway and the learning from this project would have been implemented in other areas in Argyll and Bute. However due to staff shortages and other issues this has not proven possible. It is hoped that development of the Financial Referral Pathway will be taken forward once these issues have been resolved.

Flexible Fund - Support for Vulnerable People affected by tier 4 lockdown

In June 2021 the Council agreed to support a total of 20 projects using funding provided by the Scottish Government to support vulnerable people affected by tier 4 lockdown in relation to Covid.

During the year the projects have delivered;

- Poverty Awareness Training delivered by the Poverty Alliance to 220 staff across the Council and its community planning partners. Participants described the course as informative, thought provoking, eye-opening and enlightening (See section on Training in this report). A full report on outcomes will be delivered to the Council’s Leadership Team and plans to take actions related to the feedback will be made from there.
- School Clothing Banks (SCB), proposal is to have a sustainable use school clothing bank available across Argyll and Bute by December 2022. Plans are moving quickly in Campbeltown, Rothesay and Dunoon at present and SCB will be established in advance of the new school term in August 2022.
- School Clothing Grant Top-Up of £75 per eligible pupil was paid out in January 2021. A total of £128,000 was issued to 1,711 children to help provide them with money for clothing over the winter period.
- Grant funding of £10,000 was provided to Women’s Aid and Rape Crisis support agencies given the increases in customer contact through the pandemic.
- Funding of £20,000 was provided to support young carers groups throughout the pandemic.
- Computer hardware and Wi-Fi networking works of £10,000 were undertaken in facilities where people with physical and learning disabilities and suffering from mental health issues were seeking support.
- Grant funding of £30,000 was provided to village halls and wide community groups and organisations that were supporting vulnerable people throughout the pandemic

- Vulnerable adults and victims of telephone fraud were given call screening kits and support from Police Scotland to ensure that they were safe and protected in the future from scammers. The value of this support was £10,000.
- Funds of £40,000 were awarded for support groups of vulnerable people affected by addiction and substance misuse.
- Care experienced young people were supported with £39,750 used to grant gym and leisure memberships to help improve physical and mental health and driving lessons and provisional licences to improve inclusion and employability.
- Support for groups and classes in community venues and visits to people at home if they could not manage to get to the gym for those who have reduced confidence and ability to socially engage for various functional and psychosocial reasons. This includes the use of Physiotherapy at a total cost of £65,000.
- Grants of £85,000 were made to meet the increasing cost of energy and mitigate fuel poverty with £50,000 of this for those suffering from Cancer and other serious conditions.

E. Other Planned Work

Rural Growth Deal

The Rural Growth Deal (RGD) will deliver £50 million of investment from the Scottish and UK Governments with Argyll and Bute Council and key stakeholders seeking to contribute at least £20m of additional match funding in order to accelerate inclusive economic growth for the region. The next key milestone for the RGD will be signing the full deal agreement at which stage funding will start to be drawn down and projects delivered. Given the focus on inclusive economic growth, projects will also require integrated impact assessments to be undertaken as part of the approvals process. An Equalities Steering Group has been established for the RGD and the RGD Programme Management Office are also represented on the Council's Equalities Forum.

The RGD proposals are designed to deliver success across Argyll, based on three key drivers:

Connecting: our high value business sectors with national and international business markets; our local economic successes with national strategic priorities

Attracting: additional skills, training and learning opportunities; new residents, visitors and businesses

Growing: doing more of what works; making more of our natural and built resources
The deal will also be a key part of the Covid-19 recovery plan for the region by providing critical infrastructure and financial support which will accelerate the recovery of local sectors.

The RGD includes the following 8 key investment themes:-

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;

Creating a Low Carbon Economy – Explore options for the decarbonisation of Islay using a ‘whole systems’ approach that will consider power, heat and transport as well as placing the needs of the individual and business consumer at its centre to ensure that future energy systems are sustainable and support inclusive economic growth;

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;

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;

Argyll - Digital Connectivity – This project aims to digitally future proof all RGD investments focusing on the provision of gigabit capable broadband and enhanced mobile connectivity in rural areas;

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.

Given that the RGD is not yet in the delivery stages, the impact on child poverty will have been limited to date however, there are projects that could have positive impacts moving forward.

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. 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.)

[Local Authority Covid-19 Economic Recovery Fund \(LACER\)](#)

In April 2022 the Council approved a range of options to support local economic recovery and cost of living impacts on low-income households.

The following suite of options were agreed and are being implemented this financial year 2022/2023.

[Issue Scotland Loves Local Cards to Households in Receipt of Council Tax Reduction \(CTR\).](#)

Cards of a value of £120 will be issued to around 6,500 CTR recipients in June 2022

[Support for the Gypsy Traveller Population with Food and Fuel Costs](#)

Funding of £10,000 has been provided to Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project (MECOPP) to engage with Gypsy Travellers to review the cost of living challenges faced by the group given factors such as their remote rural location and the facilities available to the for their everyday living. Costs for engagement activities and food and fuel vouchers will be met by the fund.

Working with the third sector to provide additional fuel poverty advice and support the increased demand due to the cost of living crisis.

A total of £130,000 to support the increased demand for advice services and to top up funding for fuel vouchers to give to those most in need of support with energy bills. This covers the provision of £40,000 each to Argyll Lomond and the Islands Energy Advice group, Bute Advice Centre and Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau to support them with the increased demand due to the cost of living crisis. In addition the provision of an additional £10,000 to the Fuel Bank Foundation to cover the cost of fuel vouchers for vulnerable people.

New Enterprise Support Grant

£120,000 fund to help new businesses start up and become established. Monies to assist up to 40 new businesses start up and become established in our area.

Small Business Development Grant

£200,000 allocated to help existing micro and small business improve their resilience or growth assisting them to:

- implement green initiatives e.g. change packaging;
- implement digital development e.g. improve their website;
- implement marketing improvements e.g. advertising and trade fairs;
- improve efficiency and innovation e.g. capital equipment.

Argyll and Bute Shop Local Card

£40,000 funding to continue the card scheme for another two years and also increase marketing and uptake. This is money on cards that can only be spent in Argyll and Bute thus boosting our local economies.

Sector Specific Support Grant for Businesses

£150,000 to implement projects that contribute to the sector as well as benefitting businesses e.g.

- Tourism and hospitality – support businesses with a project that improves visitor experience and facilities. Cafes that improve their seating and outdoor facilities.
- Food and drink, new product development grant to support testing, packaging and labelling to target new markets.
- Retail. Support retailers moving into an empty shop.
- Regional support for additional specialist advice and tailored grants to support businesses in hard hit areas with higher than average unemployment.
- Support the increased demand due to the cost of living crisis.

Child Poverty Group:

In the coming year the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Group will:

- Deliver more training to staff, young people and other stakeholder groups;
- Form a Communications and Engagement Group and further develop these areas of work;
- Use child poverty and related data to identify people and places where support requires to be focused;
- Link to the work that will be happening both locally and nationally, to embed the UNCRC and children's rights into law, good practice and public awareness.

This report was produced by
the Argyll & Bute Child
Poverty Action Group.

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