

A close-up photograph of a person's hands signing a document. The document has a pink top section with the text 'Tackling Poverty in Renfrewshire' and a teal bottom section with 'Report on Tackling'. The person is wearing a maroon jacket and holding a white pen. The background is blurred, showing other people and what appears to be a public event.

# Tackling Poverty in Renfrewshire

Our journey so far



“Why should poverty stop success in school?”

“Poverty is costly, wasteful and risky”

Male life expectancy  
Bishopton: 81 years  
Ferguslie: 64 years

Scotland's 3rd  
busiest foodbank

Equal life chances  
for all children

No barriers and  
no attainment gap

Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission Launch

## VISION

We want a Renfrewshire where no child lives in poverty. All children should be able to achieve their potential and feel healthy, happy and valued, no matter how much money their parents or carers have.

We want a Renfrewshire where everyone understands that tackling poverty is everyone's responsibility. We believe that if we act locally, and in partnership, we can make a real difference.

# Tackling Poverty in Renfrewshire

Renfrewshire has been on an important journey since the report and recommendations of Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission in 2015. This booklet shows our journey so far, and some of our key achievements.

Renfrewshire Council's Tackling Poverty Programme is a big, fast and ambitious programme which shows a real commitment to delivering change for people in Renfrewshire.

There are approximately 50 projects within the programme, which are varied in size and scope.

## About the programme

The Tackling Poverty Programme stretches across all the services within Renfrewshire Council, including a wide range of our partners. We structure the programme in line with the three strategic outcomes and six local priorities outlined within the Tackling Poverty Strategy.

Some projects have large budgets, such as our £1million project to expand Families First to three new local areas. Other projects have no budget, as they are met by existing resources or are more focussed on making a change to the way we work.

Some projects are complex, for example our Joint Employability Programme which is comprised of 14 separate projects. Other projects are simple, for example, providing financial support to the Foodbank.

Some projects extend services that already existed that we believe are key to tackling poverty, for example our Energy Advice project. Others are testing and trialling innovative new approaches, such as our Literacy Development project.

### March 2015

Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission published its findings and recommendations for a strategic and coordinated response to tackling poverty in Renfrewshire.

### April 2015

Renfrewshire's Community Planning Partnership accepted the recommendations, and the Council made an investment of £6 million to kick start the Commission's recommendations.

### June 2015

Renfrewshire Council and Community Planning Partnership approved the Tackling Poverty Action Plan to deliver the Commission's recommendations.

### September 2015

Council approved a Tackling Poverty Strategy which put the action plan in the strategic context of the Council and its partners for 2015–2017.

Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission was set up to assess the nature, causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire, and make recommendations for the introduction of a strategic approach for the Community Planning Partnership.

The Commission was the first of its kind in Scotland, and this is what made its recommendations different; they are designed to be delivered in partnership, and focused on making a difference at a local level.

Breakfast Clubs



# Pockets—Maximising household resources of families on low incomes

## Our priorities:

- Increase the number of people who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living
- Prevent financial crisis and support low-income families to make the most of their money

We've been building on our existing commitments around Living Wage in Renfrewshire. In August 2016, Renfrewshire Council became an Accredited Living Wage employer. We are working to promote the benefits of the Living Wage across Renfrewshire and building on work we have already done this year to weight fair working practices (such as family-friendly policies) in our procurement exercises.

One of the Tackling Poverty Commission's biggest concerns was the rate of sanctions in Renfrewshire, and it's encouraging to see sanction rates have fallen significantly. We will however be placing claimant support officers in each Job Centre in Renfrewshire to strengthen the partnership working with the Department for Work and Pensions, and to provide direct support to claimants to meet their claimant commitments and avoid sanctions.

**Between March and December 2014, there were a total of 2,192 sanctions to Job Seekers Allowance in Renfrewshire. This reduced noticeably to 614 in the same time period in 2015.**

One of our key priorities is addressing the 'poverty premium'—where poorer people pay more for the same basic products or services. We've been working with the five local credit unions to boost credit union membership and offer low cost credit. Credit unions are also now offering ethical funeral loans and plans in order to tackle funeral poverty.

**“We realised our members were crying out for instant access to short-term credit. We believe in promoting thrift and affordability. People should not have to pay extortionate prices to access these financial services and so the Salary Stretcher Loan product was born, with the help and support of Renfrewshire Council's Credit Union Development Fund.”**

Karen Graham, manager of Renfrewshire Wide Credit Union

Our Energy Advice team tackles fuel poverty by helping local families to reduce their energy costs, getting them a fairer deal, offering fuel debt support, and making sure they receive any help they're entitled to, like the Warm Home Discount. This project was extended in July 2015, following a successful pilot as part of the Welfare Reform Resilience Fund.

**July 2015, energy advocates have visited 989 homes generated savings of £273,015**

We have provided financial support to Renfrewshire Foodbank to ensure we sustain an important safety net for many people in Renfrewshire. The numbers of people using foodbanks in Renfrewshire is at a steady rate, with benefit delays, low income and benefit changes remaining the top three reasons why people access the foodbank in Renfrewshire.

A new advice partnership has been formed, which brings together key advice-giving agencies in Renfrewshire in order to maintain a strategic view of advice services. The Partnership's new Advice Renfrewshire website and phonenumber will act as a simple one-stop-shop for accessing all advice services in Renfrewshire, making it as easy as possible for citizens to access the right advice at a suitable time, and in a convenient location.

**“I use the Foodbank. It has been brilliant. I heard about energy advisers at the Foodbank and was referred to them as I am paying a fortune.**

**[What could be done?] Sort out the benefits. They are strict on the wrong people.”**



(above) Stephen had an aneurysm and is unable to work. Instead, to give something back to his community, he volunteers at the Foodbank, making tea and coffee for the clients. He is there every day, and thinks the Foodbank is fantastic, as without it so many people wouldn't eat.

**Last year, Renfrewshire Foodbank provided 3,621 food packages.**

# Prospects—Improving life chances of children living in poverty

## Our priorities:

- Improve levels of physical and mental health of children in low-income families
- Close the educational attainment gap between children from low-income families and their better-off peers

The Literacy Development Programme is an innovative new programme which is transforming the teaching of reading in Renfrewshire schools. Working with the University of Strathclyde, the project provides extensive professional development to head teachers and class teachers across primary and secondary schools to support the teaching of literacy.

The Cost of the School Day fund was launched in September 2015 and addresses the cost of the school day by giving schools a budget to support the costs of trips, uniform, equipment etc for pupils from low income households.

We have extended our innovative family support programme, Families First, to three new localities; Foxbar, Johnstone and Gallowhill. This unique and successful programme has been independently evaluated by the University of Glasgow as ‘overwhelmingly positive’, and is also being held up as a national example to follow.

A number of our projects are designed to improve mental wellbeing and resilience among young people. In addition to rolling out School Counselling across all secondary schools, our Peer Health Education programme supports young people in Renfrewshire to become peer health champions, and lead activities in their schools which support healthy living.



(above) The Peer Health project won a national award from The British Heart Foundation for Impact and won two local awards for Youth Group of the Year (Linwood High peer educators) and Young Sports Person of the Year (Daryn Black, Linwood Parkour).

**“The cost of the school day funding has allowed our school to support pupils to engage with school activities that may otherwise have been out of reach. From educational trips to art material, homework support packs and home economics cooking costs, the pressure has been taken off families in a discreet and sensitive way. Funding has encouraged staff to consider the hidden costs of school, and to be mindful poverty is a very real issue for some pupils and parents.”**

New Breakfast Clubs were launched in early 2016 in four schools, and have now been extended to a further ten schools. Breakfasts are offered universally with no age or income limit, and include activity and information days where pupils participate in fun activities and learn about topics such as healthy eating.



**“The Breakfast Club is already making an amazing difference to our pupils. Several of the teachers have commented on seeing a positive difference in particular children who had previously arrived in school lethargic and disengaged from their learning and who now arrive in class motivated, enthused and engaged with their learning. We have also had a few mums telling us that the provision of a breakfast club will enable them to attend college or university.”**

## Places—Children from low-income households live in well-designed sustainable places

### Our priority:

- Create neighbourhoods where people want to live and can afford to live

Street Stuff provides fun, free activities for children aged eight and over across Renfrewshire.

The programme has been expanded, with two new Street Stuff buses now in use and an extended programme of activities in new locations. In particular, we've been able to offer more activities in the holiday periods, including providing healthy meals for the young people participating.

37,269 attendances last year

4,500 healthy meals provided

170 young people attending holiday activities, per day

75% reduction in youth disorder

“Half of our staff members came through the programme which is an additional incentive for kids to get involved—one day they may become a coach.”

Street Stuff

We have recruited an additional enforcement officer to work within the private rented housing sector making sure private landlords are registered, and undertaken a full review of how the council works with the private rented sector.

We are also undertaking research and analysis to help us understand total housing costs for tenants living in the social rented sector and are reviewing best practice from landlords in supporting tenants to sustain tenancies. Renfrewshire Council is working in partnership with Bridgewater, Paisley South, Williamsburgh, Linstone and Ferguslie Park Housing Associations.

We have offered a number of employability opportunities within community safety, with a number of young people working in traineeships as special wardens and community safety officers. In addition to keeping our communities safe and clean, trainees have undergone an intensive training programme delivered by key partners such as Police Scotland.



Special Wardens

# Principles—How organisations should work

## Our priority:

- **Narrow inequalities by working in a way which is inclusive, effective and evidence-based.**

Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission made a series of recommendations around how organisations should work, and these are the five key principles of the Tackling Poverty Strategy and Action Plan. These principles are relevant to all of the projects within the Action Plan, and are woven through the programme.

### Address stigma

### Involve people

### Remove barriers

### Use evidence

### Use of resources

## Address Stigma

In February 2015, we signed up to the 'Stick Your Labels' campaign to tackle poverty related stigma, run by the Poverty Alliance.

We've also been piloting stigma training with Star Project, and have completed our first phase working with our Customer Service Centre.

**“The stats were eye-opening, it's not what I thought.”**

## Involve people

We have continued to engage with people living in poverty throughout the life of the project, and in particular working with local third sector organisations to facilitate discussions with citizens. The latest discussions asked citizens whether they could see the impacts of some of our projects on the ground, and asked how citizens want us to report progress back to the individuals and communities that are most affected by the programme. Our aim is to create an ongoing conversation with citizens, rather than do traditional consultation exercises with a start and end date.

**“How do you think the Council and its partners should report progress to make sure it is transparent, accessible and meaningful to local people?”**

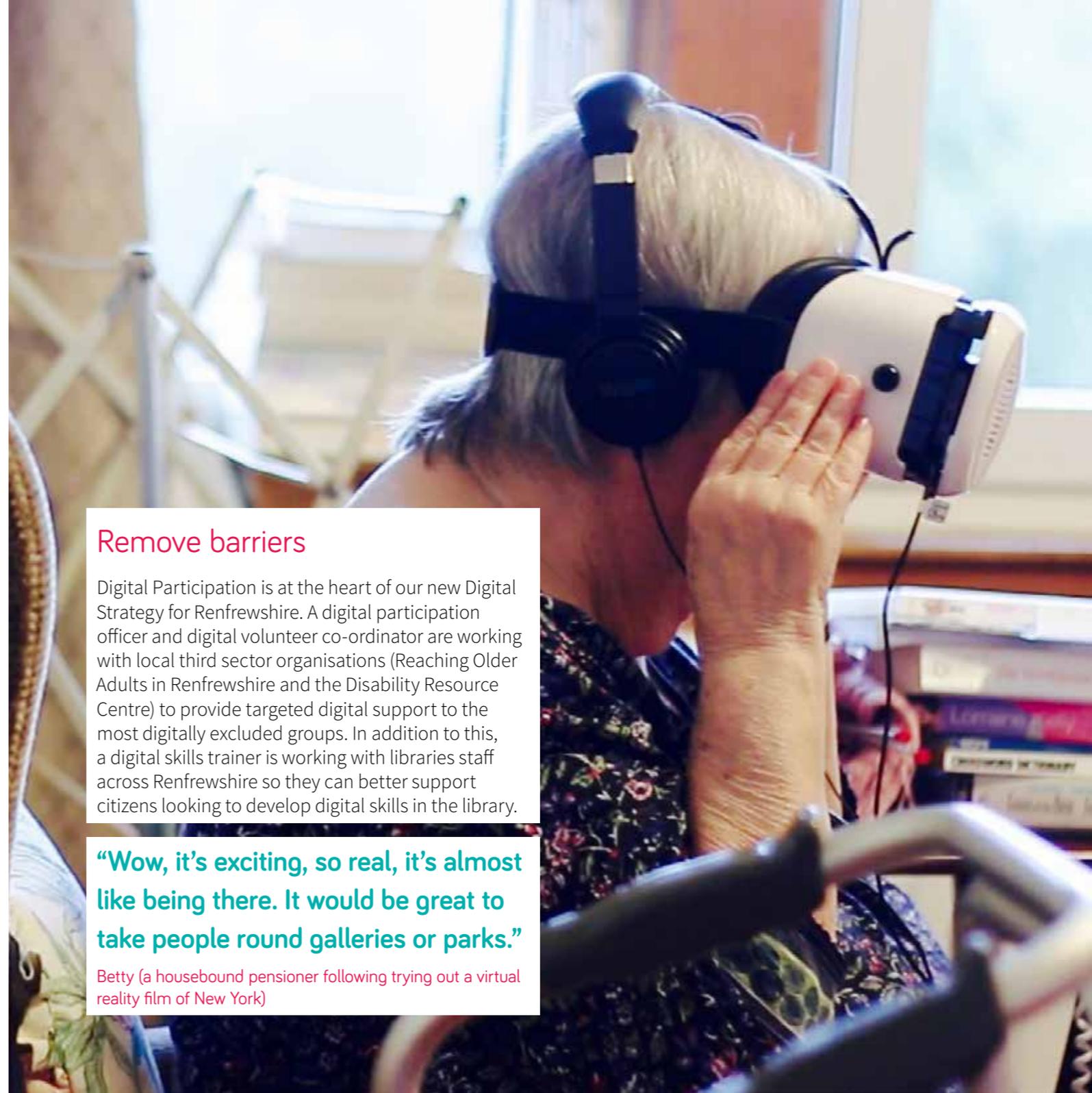
**Keep talking about it, it's not a dirty secret.”**

## Remove barriers

Digital Participation is at the heart of our new Digital Strategy for Renfrewshire. A digital participation officer and digital volunteer co-ordinator are working with local third sector organisations (Reaching Older Adults in Renfrewshire and the Disability Resource Centre) to provide targeted digital support to the most digitally excluded groups. In addition to this, a digital skills trainer is working with libraries staff across Renfrewshire so they can better support citizens looking to develop digital skills in the library.

**“Wow, it's exciting, so real, it's almost like being there. It would be great to take people round galleries or parks.”**

Betty (a housebound pensioner following trying out a virtual reality film of New York)



## Measuring Success

We are continuing to develop a robust Tackling Poverty Measurement Framework, which comprises a number of tools at project and programme level to measure the impact and effectiveness of the Strategy and Action Plan.

All of the projects within the Tackling Poverty Action Plan have identified project success measures and performance indicators. These are separated into key outputs and outcomes for each individual project, and the projects are aligned to the strategic outcomes of Pockets, Prospects and Places.

A number of projects within the Action Plan have project evaluations arranged in order to establish the effectiveness of the projects, particularly projects that test or trial new ways of working. In addition to this, a number of projects also have existing evaluation arrangements. These evaluations will be shared wherever this is possible, and made available on the Council's website.

Citizen feedback was a significant part of Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission's work, and continues to be a key element of evaluating the effectiveness of the Strategy and Action Plan. In line with the Commission's engagement approach, engagement activity will provide a rich source of qualitative data that reflects on the performance of individual projects, and the programme as a whole.

A 'Poverty in Renfrewshire Dashboard' has been developed in order to give a more responsive picture of poverty in Renfrewshire, by looking at key causes and impacts of poverty as well as poverty levels themselves. The indicators for the dashboard are a mix of both national and local indicators.

The national indicators come from the national Child Poverty Measurement Framework, and are therefore already aligned to the programme's strategic outcomes through the national logic model. In addition they come from national data sets which allow for benchmarking with other local authority areas and also national trends. The local indicators will provide a more localised and responsive picture, by using local datasets to provide more regular feedback on key issues.



