

About You	
1.	Your Name
	1. Diane Dunn 2. Lynne Kerr
2.	Your Employer / Organisation
	Renfrewshire Council
3.	Your Position
	1. Fairer Renfrewshire Lead Officer Partnerships and Inequalities 2. Senior Service Delivery Officer – Benefits and Advice Services
4.	Your E-Mail at Work
	1. diane.dunn@renfrewshire.gov.uk 2. -
5.	Your Address at Work
	Renfrewshire House Cotton Street Paisley
6.	Your Telephone Number at Work
	0300 300 1238
7.	Your Role in the Project
	1. Diane Dunn – Fairer Renfrewshire Lead Officer at Renfrewshire Council, working across Fairer Renfrewshire policy areas, including advice services. 2. Lynne Kerr – Senior service delivery officer for benefits and advice services who holds responsibility for the Advice Works service.
An Introduction to the Project	
8.	Which partner organisations are involved in delivering the project (local authorities, organisations, community groups, etc.)?
	Renfrewshire Council
9.	Does the project have specific aims and/or objectives?
	The aim of the project is to support families who are applying for Free School Meals (FSM) and School Clothing Grants (SCG), especially families who have never approached an advice service before. A large portion of service users are living in poverty. The service offers income maximising services at a time when they are already approaching the Council for support. Advice Works knows these families are on low income and are likely to be in Child Poverty Priority Groups as they are applying for FSM/SCG. The full range of Advice Works services are offered to families, including engaging with them to help increase their income by providing money and benefits advice as well as to help them manage their debts. They may be struggling to re-pay bills, have significant debts, live on reduced income, or are experiencing a change in circumstances that has dramatically reduced their incomes. Although it primarily targets families applying for FSM/SCG, the service is available

	to anyone. Some service users are working, have savings and assets, or own their own home but are nonetheless experiencing financial strains. Advice Works encourages those who are struggling to reach out to get a benefit check and see if there is anything they are entitled to.
10.	Does the project have a title?
	Automatic Offer of Advice to Those Claiming Free School Meals/School Clothing Grants through Advice Works (Renfrewshire)
11.	When did it start?
	July 2023.
12.	Has it finished? Is it on-going? Does it have an end date?
	On-going with no end date. The questions used to engage the families have been tweaked in 2024, however the service will continue to be offered to those applying for FSM/SCG each year.
13.	Which groups of people, if any, are targeted by the service provided?
	Low-income families who are applying for FSM/SCG.
14.	How many people have been served by the project?
	From the 4,666 applications made for FSM/SCG, 1,283 parents responded 'yes' to Advice Works screening questions. Of these, 524 parents engaged with Advice Works. 77 of them received additional income through income maximisation advice, with Client Financial Gain totalling £110,000.
15.	Where is it delivered?
	Renfrewshire.
The Initial Idea	
16.	Who had the initial idea?
	Renfrewshire Council
17.	How did the idea for the project come about?
	The idea came about following discussions on information the Council had on household composition and the financial situation of low-income families. This information was used to provide additional advice to low-income families to help improve their financial situation. Renfrewshire's Customer Service Unit staff had improved the process for free school meals and clothing grants by offering applications online. Three questions were added to the application form to offer advice automatically as part of the application process. Instead of cold-calling people, they decided to reach out to these service users as part of a process they would have to go through anyway to claim FSM/SCG.
18.	Did you draw on any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice you had seen elsewhere to inform your plans?
	Yes. The wording from a Renfrewshire Council Community Care Grant form was used. The Council used three questions on benefits, budgeting, and money advice and worked with their digital team to inform and encourage people to come forward for advice.
19.	Who was involved in developing the initial idea of the project?

	Advice Works and Customer Service Staff within Renfrewshire Council were involved in developing the initial idea.	
20.	Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	
	No, but there is a Fairer Renfrewshire Panel made up of people with lived experience of poverty who provide feedback.	
21.	What funding was used, if any, to support the development of the initial idea of the project?	
	N/A	
22.	What in-kind resources were needed when developing the initial idea of the project?	
	Facilities	Office space.
	Equipment	Computers, internet, telephone.
	Local Knowledge	Information from the data held by the Council.
	Food and Drink	N/A
23.	What, if any, barriers did you have to overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?	
	N/A	
24.	What, if anything, was helpful when developing the initial idea of the project?	
	Data Renfrewshire Council held on demand for FSM/SCG was helpful when developing the initial idea.	
25.	Did you conduct a feasibility study?	
	No.	
26.	What was the timeline between the initial idea and the start of the project?	
	N/A	
27.	Who made the decision to introduce the project?	
	Renfrewshire Council staff (Advice Works) and the Fairer Renfrewshire panel provided feedback.	
Pilot Project		
28.	Did you run a pilot project?	
	No.	
The On-going Development of the Project		
29.	Has the project changed through time?	
	Yes.	
30.	In what ways has it changed?	
	Scale	N/A
	Location	N/A

	Population	N/A
	The Offer	In the 2024 FSM/SCG application process, the questions and process were changed so potential service users could opt in for advice rather than feel obliged to.
31.	What were the reason for these changes?	The questions were changed as it was recognised that some people felt obliged to tick the boxes to say they would like support in order to get FSM/SCG, although this wasn't the case.
Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users		
32.	Is there a referral process? If yes, how does the referral process work (self-referral, referred by other agencies, identified from an existing database)	As part of the online process for applying for FSM or SCG in 2023, applicants were given some information about the Advice Works service and were asked the following three questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you like an advice worker to check you are getting all the benefits that you are entitled to? • Do you find it difficult to pay your debts? • Do you think you would find some advice on money management helpful? Clients who responded yes to any of these questions were then contacted by Advice Works.
33.	How are potential clients made aware of the project?	All those applying were asked the questions as part of the application process.
34.	How do you keep in touch with service users? Do your service users have a preferred method of contact?	The preferred method of contact is telephone. There is also an option for a video call, although that is less popular. If someone requires face-to-face contact, then this is possible too. Contact is maintained from the start of the case to the end, including follow-up calls and multiple contacts throughout the service, possibly with different members of staff as the case progresses. They also contact service users a few weeks after they have submitted the application to check what the outcome was and to see if it entitles the person to anything else.
Working With People with Lived Experience of Poverty		
35.	Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project? <i>If so, please describe below.</i>	No.
36.	Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project, <u>supervision</u> within the project, or project <u>governance</u>? <i>If so, please describe below.</i>	The Fairer Renfrewshire lived experience panel that works alongside Diane provided feedback.
37.	Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project? <i>If so, please describe below.</i>	No.

Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working	
38.	Who has overall responsibility for the project? The Senior Service Delivery Manager (Customer and Digital Operations) who is part of the Fairer Renfrewshire Officers Group. As the manager with responsibility for the Council's advice service, they understand the Council's priority to tackle Child Poverty.
39.	Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project? The Senior Service Delivery Manager has responsibility for Customer, Business and Advice services.
40.	Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group or Organising Committee? Advice Works is part of Renfrewshire's Advice Partnership and are an integral part of Renfrewshire Council's efforts to tackle child poverty.
41.	If there is no Steering Group, what governance arrangements are in place to review strategy and performance? The service will review strategy based on outcomes.
Staffing	
42.	Are there any paid staff? Yes. The income advisors are paid staff who give advice to customers.
43.	Are volunteers involved in delivering the project? No.
Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements	
44.	Is the project part of a wider anti-poverty strategy? Yes. It is part of Renfrewshire Council's strategy to tackle poverty and inequality in the area.
45.	Is the project part of any other strategy? No.
46.	Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment. No.
Funding	
47.	Who funds the project? No funding necessary. This is a change to work practice that costs nothing but has the potential to reach those who haven't come forward for advice before. It supports a preventative approach.
48.	How is the project funded? There is a budget which is provided by Fairer Renfrewshire. A small part of this £140,000 budget is allocated to Advice Works and pays for the income advisors who support the low-income families. They work to make low-income families a priority across the Council.
49.	What is the budget for the project / how much does it cost to deliver?

50.	Is future funding based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?								
	N/A								
Resources									
51.	What in-kind resources do you need to deliver your project?								
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Facilities</td> <td>Office space.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Equipment</td> <td>Computers, phones, internet, current council IT systems and software.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local Knowledge</td> <td>Local areas to cover.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Food and Drink</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table>	Facilities	Office space.	Equipment	Computers, phones, internet, current council IT systems and software.	Local Knowledge	Local areas to cover.	Food and Drink	N/A
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52.	For each of the in-kind resources listed above, who provides it?								
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Equipment	Renfrewshire Council.								
Local Knowledge	Renfrewshire Council.								
Food and Drink	N/A								
53.	Did you have to buy or develop new IT systems, software (databases, apps) or technology to deliver your project?								
	No.								
54.	Was additional staff training required to deliver your project?								
	No.								
Formal Monitoring and Evaluation									
55.	What information, if any, do you collect about your project?								
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Number of users</td> <td>4,666 applications were made for free school meals, this covered 7,559 children. 1,340 were awarded SCG only, 4,520 received FSM & SCG, 250 were awarded FSM only. 1,283 parents initially ticked one of the boxes asking for the support as detailed at 41. Of these, 524 parents engaged with Advice Works. Of these, 77 received additional income through income max advice, with Client Financial Gain totalling £110,000.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Profile of users</td> <td>Low-income parents.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Experience of users</td> <td>Many new service users opted for money and debt advice as well as having a benefit check.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Anything else</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table>	Number of users	4,666 applications were made for free school meals, this covered 7,559 children. 1,340 were awarded SCG only, 4,520 received FSM & SCG, 250 were awarded FSM only. 1,283 parents initially ticked one of the boxes asking for the support as detailed at 41. Of these, 524 parents engaged with Advice Works. Of these, 77 received additional income through income max advice, with Client Financial Gain totalling £110,000.	Profile of users	Low-income parents.	Experience of users	Many new service users opted for money and debt advice as well as having a benefit check.	Anything else	N/A
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Experience of users	Many new service users opted for money and debt advice as well as having a benefit check.								
Anything else	N/A								
56.	How often is data collected? Who collects the data?								
	Data is reported quarterly to Fairer Renfrewshire team by Advice Works.								
57.	Do you have baseline data on what things were like before the start of the project or before users started the project? <i>Please describe the type of baseline data that you have.</i>								

	Yes. Data was collected by Renfrewshire Council Customer Services. They gathered data on service users who may be experiencing hardship or need FSM/SCG.
58.	Do you produce an annual report?
	Yes. Figures of who used the service and why is used to compare with the previous year's numbers.
59.	In what ways, if at all, do you use the data that you collect to adapt the service that you provide?
	The initial year of the project demonstrated a need for advice to be offered at this time of year and in this way for parents, however we recognised that some parents felt they had to tick the boxes saying they were interested in support, rather than because they wanted to engage. The offer of advice at application for FSM/SCG has now become 'business as usual' for the Council, however the questions have been altered to try to capture families who genuinely want to engage.
60.	Have you employed an external organisation to formally evaluate your project?
	No.
61.	If yes, in what ways, if at all, have you used the External Project evaluation to adapt the service that you provide.
	N/A
62.	Do you intend to employ an external organisation to evaluate the service that you provide in the future?
	No.
Impact	
63.	What difference has the project made?
	524 parents engaging with advice services, 77 receiving a financial gain, with a total financial gain of £110,000.
64.	How do you know this? What evidence demonstrates impact (metrics, interviews, feedback)?
	Advice Works case management system records service users and outcomes.
65.	To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?
	The project aims have been achieved as targeted low-income families have received practical help regarding school meals, benefits check, and advice on debts. Service users have gained an overall £110,000.
66.	How, if at all, has the demand for the service provided by Advice Works changed since it started?
	1,283 service users indicated they wanted advice initially. The Advice Works team had to plan the contact with these clients.
67.	If yes, has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?
	Yes. Contacting the service users who indicated they wanted advice was carefully planned over time, so Advice Works were able to meet this demand.
68.	Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?

	No.	
69.	In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty? If so, please describe in what ways.	
	Yes. It is helping tackle poverty within Child Poverty Priority and low-income families by increasing income from benefits for families, ensuring they get the benefits they are entitled to and supporting with debt and other financial worries.	
Learning from Experience		
70.	What is working well?	
	The increase in the number of service users.	
71.	What, if anything, is working less well?	
	Everything is working well.	
72.	What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners? For example, is there anything that you would do differently?	
	One key learning point is to refine application questions. This streamlines the process and makes it easier for potential service users to apply.	
73.	What plans do you have to develop or expand the project in the future?	
	They are planning to simplify the questions that service users complete for self-referral.	
74.	How easily do you think your project could be replicated in another setting?	
	Very easily.	
Social Media		
75.	Please enter social media contact details and weblinks to supporting documents or resources below:	
	Web Pages	https://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/article/3525/Advice-Works
	Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/renfrewshirecouncil/
	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/renfrewshire_council/
	Twitter	https://twitter.com/RenCouncil
	Tik-Tok	N/A
GDPR Consent (Add yes or no in the box)		
I give my permission to be named in the tackling poverty locally directory and associated public outputs.	Yes	
I give permission for our organisation to be named in the tackling poverty locally directory and associated public outputs.	Yes	
I give permission for me to be contacted by directory users.	Yes - Diane	
I am willing to be contacted if more details are required	Yes	
Request to review (Add yes or no in the box)		
Did the interviewee request to review a draft before it I sent to referees for review	Yes	