
Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	18 March 2025
Report By:	Ruth Binks Corporate Director Education, Communities and Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/22/25/TM
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Subject:	Communities Update Report – Overview of Local and National Initiatives		

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 ☒ For Decision ☒ For Information/Noting
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to update the Education and Communities Committee with developments in relation to the Communities part of the Committee.
- 1.3 Updates have been provided on the following areas:
1. Libraries as community spaces
 2. Staff development
 3. Children and young people
 4. Adult services
 5. The Watt Institution
 6. Inverclyde music service
 7. Developing a community safety lens for the Place Standard Tool - Inverclyde Pilot Site
 8. School Crossing Patroller - Sinclair Street, Greenock
 9. Hanlon Management Information System
 10. Update on various Child Poverty Initiatives including pilot programmes in upper Port Glasgow
 11. The Child Poverty Accelerator Funded Project
 12. Outstanding Remit - new smoke alarm legislation

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Education and Communities Committee notes the updates provided in this report.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities and Organisational Development

3.0 Updates

3.1 Libraries as Community Spaces

Branch libraries continue to provide space to colleagues from other services to meet with customers/clients in a safe and accessible space. This extends to both Council services and external agencies who support our communities. During March, Greenock South West Library will host the Citizens Advice Bureau to offer their Stronger Start Programme in Inverclyde. This programme looks to support pregnant and post-natal women with poverty-related issues. Branch libraries across Inverclyde also support NHS Scotland's Near Me initiative, providing private spaces and support so that customers can use video consulting services in a convenient place to participate in health and social care appointments close to home.

Through a small grant from the Inverclyde Climate Action Network (ICAN) the library service has extended its Community Fridge provision following a successful pilot at Greenock Central Library. A second fridge has now been installed at Port Glasgow Library and will be filled with assistance from Branchton Community Centre's food sharing network. This initiative at once represents a necessary resource for the communities of Greenock and Port Glasgow, whilst also helping to address the environmental challenge of food waste.

Kilmacolm Library welcomed a group of University of Glasgow Medical students in February as part of their Community Diagnosis project. Participation allows the students to explore with library staff their understanding of the community the library serves and provides an active learning experience in understanding and identifying the social determinants of health.

This year, the National Library of Scotland (NLS) celebrates its centenary. As part of wider commemorations planned, NLS has launched a 'Love Libraries' campaign. Inverclyde Libraries are an active participant in this campaign and will be delivering on-line and in-person programming celebrating our libraries.

During March Inverclyde's branch libraries will be hosting information pop-up sessions organised by Veteran's Sight Scotland, providing information to veterans affected by sight loss in Scotland.

3.2 Staff Development

The library service continues to invest in staff development, with the Scottish Book Trust on site during January to deliver Bookbug Session Leader refresher training and registration. During quarter 3 24/25, 155 Bookbug Sessions were delivered by the wider service with 2,339 children and 2,325 parent/carers in attendance. These figures are replicated across each quarter and demonstrate the importance of Bookbug as a core element of service delivery. During February the library team further capitalised on this training by delivering a series of Bookbug Session visits to childcare students and families at West College Scotland to promote the benefits of reading and singing to babies and toddlers.

Deafblind Scotland delivered face-to-face training to library staff, encouraging awareness of the needs of the Deafblind community and ensuring colleagues are equipped to support all library customers. Further training was also made available to support the Chatty Café scheme delivered in branch libraries – this training will enable an extension of Chatty Café provision across the service, helping to address the challenge of loneliness and/or social isolation in our communities.

3.3 **Children and Young People**

As part of the Scottish Government's Parent Club initiative, the Smart Play Network will deliver a series of Family Play Sessions across four of Inverclyde's branch libraries. These sessions are for families with children aged 0-4 years and promote key messages to parents and carers about the importance of playing, talking and reading with their child from birth. All sessions programmed by the library service are fully booked, with capacity for up to 10 families to attend each session.

Supporting Inverclyde Libraries' wider commitment to health and wellbeing, the team undertook outreach activity during Children's Mental Health Week (3 - 9 February) promoting reading for wellbeing. Branch libraries will also host colleagues from the NHS Childsmile programme to engage with parents and carers and distribute Childsmile resources at upcoming Bookbug sessions. Childsmile is a national programme designed to improve the oral health of children in Scotland and reduce inequalities both in dental health and access to dental services.

The children's book *Mariana and the Merchild* by author Caroline Pitcher has been republished with support from Breastfeeding Friendly Inverclyde. Copies of the books, including bright new images, have been donated to the library service (funded by NHSGGC) with the hope that the book will help spark conversations and encourage children to view breastfeeding as normal and natural.

3.4 **Adult Services**

Books on Wheels Festive Cheer: in December Christmas cards, teabags and biscuits were sent out to all Inverclyde Libraries' Books on Wheels customers with their scheduled book deliveries. Customers using this service also received a Christmas tree decoration made by our young Library Club members. The Books on Wheels service is valued by customers who don't or can't attend the library in person and helps to tackle social isolation and loneliness, while making available the mental health and wellbeing benefits that reading brings.

Inverclyde Libraries facilitated a Functional Fitness MOTs event in Port Glasgow Library in January, delivered by the Maximising Independence team (Inverclyde HSCP). This event was aimed at customers aged fifty and over, who had the opportunity to participate in an assessment of their physical abilities, including muscle strength, balance, endurance, and flexibility. Following each assessment, advice was received on how individuals could improve their functional fitness. Functional fitness allows people to conduct normal everyday activities safely and independently as they grow older. The session also included a chat about the UK's Physical Activity Guidelines for Health and the importance of being physically active. This event is an example of similar programming that seeks to support the library service's ongoing commitment to improving health literacy across Inverclyde.

Funding has been secured from the Scottish Book Trust's Live Literature programme to host an author event in Inverkip Community Hub during March. Ambrose Parry (Christopher Brookmyer and Marisa Haetzman) will be welcomed by the library team to address this already fully booked event

To mark International Women's Day on 8 March, Inverclyde Libraries are hosting a networking fayre, with the overarching aim of encouraging women to speak up, and to support women to participate confidently in business and/or public settings. The format of the event will include a speaker followed by a networking opportunity with stalls hosted by participants contacted through the Inverclyde Women in Business Forum and their associated networks. The library service will also be an active participant in the HSCP facilitated Women's Health Event on 7 March at the Beacon Arts Centre, showcasing library services, resources and partnership work which

specifically supports health and wellbeing. This will include recent partnership work with Inverclyde HSCP to encourage engagement with cancer screening services.

3.5 The Watt Institution

The Watt Institution's Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) funded project, Re-animating the Past, concludes at end March 2025. This project has focused on utilising the Watt's Natural Sciences collection (a core founding collection) to engage new and existing audiences with collections-based narratives linked to the climate crisis; biodiversity in Inverclyde; and the history of collecting. The project has used digital technology to deliver innovative interpretation solutions, including 3D scanning, 3D printing, animation, virtual reality, and augmented reality. Workshops have been delivered with school groups, adult support groups, and community groups, variously exploring the natural world around us with reference to the Watt's historic collections.

Informed by the Re-animating the Past project, the Watt Institution has secured a grant of £1,300 from Art Fund UK to enable community-focused programming inspired by THE HERDS – an act of public art and climate action on a global scale. In the UK, THE HERDS (large-scale animal puppets) will visit London. However, funding received by the Watt Institution (the only successful Scottish applicant to this project fund) will enable the creation of puppets on a smaller scale that tell a local story of changing biodiversity, with global resonance. Plastic waste found on the shores of the Clyde will be recycled as 3D printing filament, before being used to 3D print component parts for our own puppets, engaging our communities with climate narratives on their doorstep.

In partnership with Inverkip Primary School, the Watt Institution has secured £2,675 in funding from Education Scotland to create an animated film critically examining Inverclyde's colonial legacies through reference to the museum's collection. The project will explore how objects were acquired, their origins, and their impact on indigenous communities, flora, and fauna. Through this lens, the film will address key themes of empire, colonialism, and climate justice, highlighting the lasting effects of these histories on the present. This project contributes to Education Scotland's racial literacy priorities.

3.6 Inverclyde Music Service

Participation in instrumental music lessons continues to grow, with 1,542 young people currently enrolled with the Inverclyde Music Service. The Junior Wind Orchestra will compete at the Scottish Concert Band National Finals in Perth on 15 March. The following weekend, on 22 March, the Inverclyde heat of the Scottish Young Musician of the Year will take place at Inverclyde Academy, with over twenty young people who receive IMS tuition in Inverclyde expected to compete. We wish all our young people the very best over these two important events.

The annual Spring Gala Concert will celebrate all young people engaged with the IMS, and is scheduled to take place in Greenock Town Hall on Friday 27 March at 7pm.

3.7 Developing a community safety lens for the Place Standard Tool - Inverclyde Pilot Site

The Place Standard Tool provides a simple framework to structure conversations about place, based around how place impacts on health and wellbeing. The 14 themes within the tool allow individuals or groups to think about the physical elements of a place (such as the buildings, spaces, and transport) as well as the social aspects (like whether people feel they have a say in decisions or whether they feel safe) and economic aspects (like access to jobs and training). It can also help to identify and prioritise actions needed to improve places and support health and wellbeing. Recognising the strong connection between placemaking and community safety, the Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN) and Public Health Scotland (PHS) have partnered to develop a community safety focus for the Place Standard Tool.

Representatives from Inverclyde Council attended a project engagement session in March 2024 which promoted applications to be one of three national pilot sites. Recognising that this project would contribute to the development of a tool that could enhance our community planning partnerships understanding of the nuances of community safety issues that are often raised within community engagement activities such as Locality Planning, the Community Safety & Resilience team subsequently applied to be one of the pilot areas for the project. Confirmation of the successful application was confirmed by SCSN and PHS in September 2024. Officers from both Inclusive Communities Service and the HSCP Health Improvement Team attended facilitator training in February 2025 with the two other pilot sites from West Pilton, Edinburgh and Botchergate, Carlisle. The experience and knowledge gained in running this pilot will build up the local resource across the Council and HSCP in use of the Place Standard Tool as part of our place-based approach towards health improvement.

The Inverclyde pilot will run in March 2025 within a Greenock East neighbourhood area and will be attended by representatives from a range of community planning partners. Engagement work by the wider Inclusive Communities Service is also underway to enlist local people living or working in the area to participate in the walk and talk event. Anyone interested in participating can engage directly with the Service or express interest via the following form [Place Standard Project \(Greenock East\) - Expression of Interest](#)

3.8 School Crossing Patroller - Sinclair Street, Greenock

At the 3 September meeting of the Education and Communities Committee members were informed of a temporary move of a School Crossing Patrol site from a low priority rating site at Sinclair Street, Greenock to a different location within the same school catchment at Blairmore Road, Greenock. Following this temporary relocation, a decision has been made to make this change permanent. Ongoing monitoring and surveys conducted at the original, lower priority site have consistently revealed low pedestrian numbers that would not meet the guideline criteria for consideration of a school crossing patroller at this location, and no concerns have been raised to the local school regarding this adjustment.

3.9 Hanlon Management Information System

Inclusive Communities have completed the procurement process for a new management information system, with the initial start-up funding secured through a successful bid to the Council's Modernisation Fund. The Hanlon system, which is already in existing use by the Council's Economic Development team, recently launched a new Community Learning & Development module which allows tracking of individuals learning and achievements. The system will enhance the Service's ability to record delivery activity and measure the impact of service provision and projects and also facilitates the move towards a higher degree of digital record keeping and efficiency in performance management. The system also has capability to record multi-agency partnership activity, and this is something that will be explored as the Service develops its use. Procurement and user training completed in quarter four of 2024-25, and the system is planned to go-live for CLD youth work and adult learning in the same quarter, with operational use effective by 1 April 2025.

3.10 Update on various Child Poverty Initiatives including pilot programmes in upper Port Glasgow

The service continues to co-ordinate the Council's approach to alleviating child poverty in Inverclyde.

The Child Poverty Local Action Report 2023/2024 was approved by the Alliance Board in October 2024 and subsequently submitted to the Scottish Government via the Improvement Service for

analysis and feedback. The feedback for 2023/24 classified the report as "An extremely strong plan which might be used as an exemplar." The report was praised for its use of lived experience, focus on priority families, and its commitment to coordinated action, drawing on both local levers and national programmes to address child poverty.

The Early Adopter Community for Affordable Afterschool Childcare in Port Glasgow continues to develop. This programme which is funded by the Scottish Government has been ongoing since January 2023 and provides affordable childcare for families on low incomes or those who fall into the child poverty priority groups. The programme also supports families in maximising their income through providing advice on social security benefits or employment opportunities. This project will be extended to Greenock South / Southwest from March 2025, with affordable childcare offered from St Joseph's Primary School. Engagement has started with families, communities, and providers in Greenock East and Central to explore the affordable childcare offer that meets the needs of families within this area. In addition, to childcare the project offers access to financial wellbeing, learning, education, and employment support tailored to families' needs.

The Council was also successful in being granted £490k in Fairer Futures Funding from October 2024 until 31 March 2025 to pilot a multi-agency partnership approach to working in upper Port Glasgow. This initiative will be based in a newly developed Boglestone Community Hub which will provide services to improve access and outcomes for the wider communities including families more likely to be living in poverty. The Fairer Futures Partnership will serve as a model for public sector reform through better collaboration, creating a person-centred service with users at the heart of service design, to identify needs and provide support to offer choice opportunities and voice. The co-design of interventions and services with the community started in January 2025. To help with the development of this new whole family support service approach, Inverclyde Council and HSCP have recently completed intensive values-led leadership training to increase learning, collaboration and community based approaches to improve outcomes for people facing inequalities.

3.11 The Child Poverty Accelerator Funded Project

The Child Poverty Accelerator Funded Project, which took a place-based, person-centred approach to supporting families facing low mood, anxiety, and inequalities, concludes at the end of March 2025. This initiative attracted £86k between November 2023 and March 2025 and supported Home Start Inverclyde to provide a family support service to parents with poor mental health and anxiety, who were living in poverty and had children under the age of 3 years. This support service included group work, and intensive one to one support depending on the needs of the family. This funding also enabled a dedicated worker from HSCP Advice and Welfare to build relationships with Home Start and their families to maximise the household income and offer advice around affordable credit and household debt. The learning from this project is informing future activities, particularly within the Early Adopter Community and Fairer Futures Partnership detailed above. Initial evaluations from Urban Foresight (the agency commissioned to undertake the evaluations using the Child Poverty Accelerator Funding) are positive, highlighting the benefits for families and the strengthened relationships between service providers. The Cabinet Secretary from Social Justice at Scottish Government visited Inverclyde in January 2025 to meet some of the parents who have benefited from the support from Home Start Inverclyde and Inverclyde Advice Services. A full evaluation report will be available in May 2025 and reported to this Committee thereafter.

3.12 **Outstanding Remit: new smoke alarm legislation**

Compliance with the requirement to fit linked smoke alarms in domestic properties:

In the social housing sector Registered Social Landlords have all adapted all of their stock to ensure compliance with the requirement to fit linked smoke alarms. In the Private Rented Sector landlords are legally required to register all rental properties on the Landlord Registration Scotland website. When applying landlords are required to declare they meet all legal requirements which include fire, smoke and heat detection. Only applicants that complete this self-declaration are approved. It should be noted that there is no capacity to check the veracity of the declarations at the point of registration.

It is likely that full compliance in owner occupied property will take a considerable time. A large number of householders will have had works carried out to comply when the legislation initially came in but for the rest it is likely that many properties will only be brought in to full compliance when they come on to the housing market. There is no effective means to enforce the provisions of the legislation on owner occupied properties and it is unlikely that there was ever any intention that this should be done.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		x
Legal/Risk		x
Human Resources		x
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)		x
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights & Wellbeing		x
Environmental & Sustainability		x
Data Protection		x

4.1 **Finance**

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

4.2 **Legal/Risk**

N/A

4.3 Human Resources

N/A

4.4 Strategic

All updated provided in this report align to the priorities of the Council Plan and Partnership Plan.

4.5 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

Equalities

- (a) This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

	YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.
x	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement.

Fairer Scotland Duty

- (b) If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
x	NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty for the following reasons: Provide reasons why the report has been assessed as not relevant.

Children and Young People

- (c) Has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.
x	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children's rights.

4.6 Environmental/Sustainability

Summarise any environmental / climate change impacts which relate to this report.

Has a Strategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?

	YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.
x	NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.

4.7 Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
x	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 N/A

6.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 N/A