
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

22 February 2022

Cabinet

Title: Financial Inclusion in Schools

Purpose: To provide Cabinet with information on the current and proposed approach to improving financial education and financial inclusion across all school establishments

Recommendation: That Cabinet:

- a) Notes our current and proposed approach to improving financial education and financial inclusion across all school establishments
- b) Agrees to receive annual updates

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Schools in North Ayrshire are continuing to support the financial inclusion agenda, including initiatives to support families with the cost of the school day, working with children and families to have improved access to appropriate financial advice and products and empowering young people by delivery of financial education as part of the curriculum.

2. Background

- 2.1 In North Ayrshire's Children Services Plan 2020/2023, it states that according to data published in May 2021, 'it is estimated that over 6200 (27.9%) aged 0-16 could be living in poverty in North Ayrshire (national estimate 24%).
- 2.2 The Resolution Foundation describes financial exclusion as being most closely associated with poverty and low income with disproportionate numbers of financially excluded people living in areas of deprivation. Given the SIMD profile of the North Ayrshire Council area, it is therefore an imperative that we prioritise work to promote financial inclusion across our schools and establishments.
- 2.3 The Council has already made a significant commitment to mitigate the cost of the school day for families so it is important that this financial commitment is supported by work to empower children and families to understand the range of financial and budgeting supports that are available and how to access them.

- 2.4 A post of a full time Welfare Rights Officer has been funded for 23 months from August 2021 to work across Greenwood Academy, Irvine Royal Academy, Kilwinning Academy, Garnock Community Campus (Secondary), St Matthew's Academy, Largs Academy and Arran High School. Activities include:-
- Engaging with parents and carers and supporting them to access all benefits;
 - Providing financial management workshops;
 - Liaising with the Family Learning Team, Head Teachers and pastoral teams to identify families who may wish support
 - Attending breakfast blethers, parents' information evenings and other education events
 - Providing training to key education staff on Money Matters activities
- 2.5 The Ardrossan and Auchenharvie clusters are piloting a project in partnership with Community Housing Advocacy Project (CHAP). This promotes the building of financial resilience, minimising financial crisis situations and tackling child poverty. The approach focuses on maximising income and reducing outgoings, combined with budgeting, money, housing and debt advice.
- 2.6 Our Attainment Challenge funded Family Learning Team offer a range of activities including targeted approaches for those affected by poverty. These include support in signposting to other council services such as Money Matters, Skills for Life, Better Off North Ayrshire as well as providing access to digital devices and no cost education programmes. Parents, through the Family Learning Team have benefitted from achieving accreditation and qualifications through a programme offered in partnership with Ayrshire College, enhancing their employment prospects.
- 2.7 In our secondary schools, the Personal and Social Education programmes incorporate lessons that support youngsters to better understand the financial implications of lifestyle choices. CHAP provides a series of lessons on homelessness prevention and advice on decisions about housing. Resources from the Gambling Education Hub are used to provide information on the potential harm caused by gambling. Financial budgeting is a key focus in resources such as those provided by the Barclays Lifeskills programme.
- 2.8 The curriculum offers a range of age and stage appropriate financial education experiences. For example, in the numeracy and maths curriculum, at first level an outcome is 'I can use money to pay for items and can work out how much change I should receive' progressing at third level to 'I can budget effectively making use of technology and other methods to manage money and plan for future expenses.' Schools will deliver these outcomes in a variety of ways taking into account their local context, but will be taught to all as part of the core curriculum.
- 2.9 Over the past two years, our ability to have external visitors into schools has been curtailed, but with the support of DYW Ayrshire/Chamber of Commerce, a range of digital inputs have been offered. Examples of this include a programme from Money Advice Scotland that incorporates lessons on Financial Independence and Wellbeing, and Social Enterprise Scotland on ethical business set-up. A number of financial institutions have offered virtual work experience opportunities for senior pupils.

- 2.10 Again, although it has not been possible over the past two years, many of our primary schools have enhanced their financial education curriculum by running 'Money Weeks'. This includes having a series of focussed lessons, together with input from credit unions and banks to promote early saving activity. A range of visitors provide an insight to the pupils and their parents on a variety of financial topics.
- 2.11 Our Head Teachers, Head of Centres and pastoral teams in secondary schools know their families well. Discreet supports are offered to families to ensure that youngsters are not excluded. The work on mitigating the cost of the school day is now embedded and is being enhanced by activities such as school uniform exchanges/swap shops.
- 2.12 The Education Service intends to carry out a full audit and evaluation of financial education and financial inclusion within our schools to improve consistency of provision across all establishments. This will result in a high-level action plan and will be included in the Education Service Plan for 2022-23. As part of our overall approach and when Covid restrictions are lifted, we will strengthen the links between our schools and local credit unions to ensure that our pupils and the wider school community have full access to their services.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 Notes our current and proposed approach to improving financial education and financial inclusion across all establishments
- 3.2 Agrees to receive annual updates

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 The cost of the two initiatives is met from different funding sources. Presently, the initiative described in 2.4 is funded by HSCP and the initiative described in 2.5 is part-funded through the Children and Young People's Community Mental Health Supports and Services Grant. Funding to ensure the ongoing development of financial inclusion will be sourced through existing investments related to the alleviation of poverty.

Human Resources

- 4.2 The impact of the seconded Welfare Rights Officer will require to be re-evaluated at the end of the pilot.

Legal

- 4.3 None.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 The continuation of the work on financial inclusion in our schools will impact positively on socio-economic health of North Ayrshire. Further as children and families are empowered financially then inequalities and inequities will decrease.

Environmental and Sustainability

- 4.5 None.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 This work clearly links to the council's vision of a 'North Ayrshire that is fair for all'. It directly impacts on priority outcomes 'Our children and young people have the best start in life', 'North Ayrshire has an inclusive, growing and enterprising economy' and 'North Ayrshire's residents and communities enjoy good life-long health and wellbeing'.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 Although there are no immediate direct impacts, the building of a financially inclusive and empowered community is integral to the aims of a Community Wealth Building approach to the local economy.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 None.

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For further information please contact **Laura Cook, Quality Improvement Officer**, on **01294 324454**.

Background Papers

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