

Case Study 1 – Local Partnership Response to impacts of Welfare Reform

VAER (Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire) is appointed by the Scottish Government to champion the third sector's interests in Community Planning and other strategic partnerships – we do this through our TSF (Third Sector Forum). This arrangement facilitates partnership opportunities including with third sector, the Council's Chief Executives, Economic Development and CHCP departments.

As well as TSF thematic networks that link directly to the 5 SOA outcomes, we run a Third Sector Chief Officers' Network, facilitate the 'practitioners' employability network' involving relevant third sector and public sector partners and sit on the strategic 'Opportunities for All' partnership so have strategic and operational intelligence to contribute to local thinking.

The *Chief Officers' Network's recent discussions have focussed on the impacts of Welfare Reform on local people. We agreed that there were funding streams that might help to deal with these impacts. Two applications brought success:

- **HERO (Helping East Renfrewshire Online funded by Scottish Legal Aid Board) -** CAB is lead partner of this project that supports local people that do not have access to computers to learn how to use them and how to do online benefit registration and job searches. This support is available to any East Ren resident. (Partners include CAB, BHA and VAER)
- **PCER (Partnership Care East Renfrewshire funded by Big Lottery) -** BHA took the lead partner role to develop an application that would provide support to BHA and Arklet tenants to access:
 - energy advice
 - support to change utility providers
 - benefit maximisation
 - financial management support
 - Credit Union bank accounts
 - specialist support to disabled people.

This support is available to Arklet and BHA tenants only to help address fuel poverty issues. (Partners include BHA, Arklet Housing, CAB, Credit Union & VAER)

A requirement of both funds is to have a steering group of the key partners but as the TSI, VAER felt it essential to include a much wider range of local agencies because of the circumstances of the people most likely to need these services. (**Participants listed at end of this case study)

Our aspiration is that we complement these services by accessing funding to make sure other all other East Ren residents that need it but do not live in Arklet/BHA housing stock to have access to these kinds of support. Negotiations are underway to involve all of the key Council departments to develop a third sector/public sector application.

Welfare Resilience Fund – As an action from the November PAR meeting, the Council brought a network of organisations and agencies together to support a Welfare Resilience employability application with a view to developing an on-going, streamlined referral and support pathway for residents most affected by welfare reform and to grow the capacity across East Renfrewshire to support the initiative.

*The Chief Officers' Network currently includes Arklet Housing Association, BHA (Barrhead Housing Association), East Renfrewshire Carers, CAB (Citizens Advice), NDT (Neilston Development Trust) and RAMH.

**List of wider partners to steering group:

Acumen, 2 x Community Councils, DWP, ERC (Adult & Family Learning, Customer Services, Housing, Libraries, Welfare Rights), East Ren Carers, East Ren Disability Action (ERDA), East Ren Foodbank, Home Energy Scotland, RAMH.