

WELFARE RIGHTS TEAM PLAN V0.1

1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

Background, context and overall purpose of the Welfare Rights Service

Argyll & Bute Council have provided a Welfare Rights service to local clients since 1996, when the duty to provide the service transferred to the new unitary Scottish Local Authorities.

The welfare rights section supports the implementation of the Local Housing Strategy through the provision of welfare rights advice to support people to live independently and prevent homelessness. The service has a key focus on maximising income and reducing poverty.

The service is available to clients resident in Argyll & Bute who may be entitled to receive both UK and devolved benefits. There is a Welfare Rights Officer located in each of the main towns. The Welfare Rights service is available throughout the whole of Argyll & Bute.

The service aims to provide Type II & III Welfare Rights advice directly to clients and to refer Type I Welfare Rights clients to ABCAB and other local agencies under our contract or agreement with those organisations.

The service aim is to ensure that clients are in receipt of all benefits that they are entitled to & to maximise household income.

The Welfare Rights Service

The welfare rights service supports the implementation of the Local Housing Strategy through the provision of welfare rights advice to support people to live independently and prevent homelessness.

The Welfare Rights Team aims to ensure that the residents of Argyll and Bute are not missing out on their entitlement to both UK and Scottish Government administered benefits and other related help.

We provide advice to members of the public on claiming benefit, including carrying out benefit checks and helping to complete application forms. We can also provide representation for clients if they wish to challenge a decision, we will assess the merits of the client's case and provide representation at tribunal if they have a case.

Some members of our team are funded by MacMillan Cancer Support and they are able to provide an enhanced Welfare Rights Service for people affected by cancer.

The service has a key focus on maximising income and reducing poverty. Our support is targeted at some of the most vulnerable in our communities and makes a significant contribution to tackling fuel poverty by maximising household income.

Contact Information

Address:

Welfare Rights Service.
Trading Standards and Advice Services,
Kilmory,
Lochgilphead PA31 8RT

Telephone number: 01546 605517

Email address: welfare.rights@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Number of sites advice service operates from

4 sites across Argyll and Bute:

- The Civic Centre, Helensburgh. G84
- 1A Manse Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD
- The Burnet Building, Campbeltown PA28 6BJ
- Municipal Buildings, Oban PA34 4AW

Number of Welfare Rights advisers

Welfare Rights posts - 10 posts currently filled

- 1x Senior Welfare Rights Officer - 35 hours
- 4x Welfare Rights Officers – 35 hours
- 3x Welfare Rights Assistants – 2 @ 35 hours and 1 @ 28hrs
- 2x MacMillan Welfare Rights Assistants – 2 @ 17.5 hours

Hours of operation

9am – 5pm Monday to Friday

Staff are available flexibly between 9am & 5pm Monday to Friday.

If an appointment is required out with the above times, it can be arranged on a case-by-case basis to suit the client's needs where possible

Method of Service Delivery

Advice and support is now provided by various channels as appropriate and agreed with the client. These include options such as office based, surgeries, drop in's home visits, telephone enquiries, and video

If an office appointment is required it would normally be in one of the main council offices or occasionally at an outreach location.

Team Plan

CODE	TASK	ASSIGNED TO	DUE BY	STATUS	Revised target
TP-1	Implement the Local Housing Strategy through the provision of welfare rights advice.	WR Team	31 March 2025	Green	
TP-2	Tribunal Representation	WR Team	31 March 2025	Green	
TP-3	Performance Management	WR Team	31 March 2025	Green	
TP-4	Support to Council Staff/ Health and Social Care Partnership	WR Team	31 March 2025	Green	
TP-5	Promote Partnership Working	WR Team	31 March 2025	Green	
TP-6	Staff Training and Development	WR Team	31 March 2025	Green	
TP- 7	Service Planning	WR Team	31 March 2025	Green	

Team Plan: Detail**TP-1**

CODE	TASK/MILESTONES	LED BY	PERIOD/DUE BY	STATUS	Outstanding actions / comments
TP-1	Implement the Local Housing Strategy through the provision of welfare rights advice	S. Tuite	31 March 2025	Green	
1.1	Income maximisation and aim to generate £2.75 million per annum			Green	Highlight report to L&R Management Team – quarterly
1.1.2	Quarter 1		31/03/2024		
1.1.3	Quarter 2		30/06/2024		
1.1.4	Quarter 3		31/12/2024		
	Quarter 4		31/03/2025		
1.2	Engage with Local Housing Strategy development for the 2021-2026 plan Income maximization figure – Minimum of £10m generated via Welfare Rights activity by 2026			Green	Provided annual LHS update to Housing April 2024 already exceeded target. Income Max Figure 2021-22 £2,728,847 2022-23 £4,324,342 2023-24 £4,457,792 2024-25 Joint engagement events on 02/08/24 and 09/11/2024 with Housing Services
1.3	Provide advocacy to and negotiate on behalf of clients			Green	Ongoing as part of core work

TP-2

CODE	TASK/MILESTONES	LED BY	PERIOD/DUE BY	STATUS	Outstanding actions / comments
TP-2	Tribunal Representation	S. Tuite	31 March 2025		
2.1	Provide representation for appellants at HMCTS and appeals to the Social Security Chamber including attending oral hearings			Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – monthly and quarterly
2.1.1	Quarter 1		31/03/2024		2 appeals heard 2 appeals lapsed 13 MR's/Redeterminations
2.1.2	Quarter 2		30/06/2024		3 appeals heard 13 MR's/Redeterminations
2.1.3	Quarter 3		31/12/2024		1 appeal heard 16 MR's/Redeterminations
2.1.4	Quarter 4		31/03/2025		
2.2	Assist with appeals to Upper Tribunal			Green	Ongoing – none so far 2024 - 25

TP-3

CODE	TASK/MILESTONES	LED BY	PERIOD/DUE BY	STATUS	Outstanding actions / comments
TP-3	Performance Management	S. Tuite	31 March 2025		
3.1	Reports on benefit type, referrals, income generated and demographics			Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – monthly and quarterly
3.2	Quarterly audits 15% of case load – monitoring consistency and quality of advice given, case recording.			Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – monthly and quarterly
3.3	Customer Satisfaction Surveys – collated quarterly and annually			Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – monthly and quarterly
3.4	Quarterly report to MacMillan Cancer Support			Green	Ongoing – quarterly MacMillan return

CODE	TASK/MILESTONES	LED BY	PERIOD/DUE BY	STATUS	Outstanding actions / comments
3.1.1	Quarter 1	31/03/2024		Green	
3.1.2	Quarter 2	30/06/2024			
3.1.3	Quarter 3	31/12/2024			
3.1.4	Quarter 4	31/03/2025			
3.5	Annual MacMillan review			Green	Report to MacMillan partnership team lead completed January 2024
3.6	Welfare Advice in Health Partnerships (WAHP) – NHS Project			Green	Quarterly reporting to Improvement Service with case studies completed for 2023-24., and ongoing for 2024-25. Update Report provided to all 5 surgeries + NHS health Improvement lead who will share within HSCP Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – monthly and quarterly financial gain
3.6.1	Quarter 1		31/03/2024		
3.6.2	Quarter 2		30/06/2024		
3.6.3	Quarter 3		31/12/2024		
3.6.4	Quarter 4		31/03/2025		
3.7	Annual WR Report/statement			Green	Produced August 2024 LRS Management Team

TP-4

CODE	TASK/MILESTONES	LED BY	PERIOD/DUE BY	STATUS	Outstanding actions / comments
TP-4	Support to Council Staff/Health and Social Care Partnership	S. Tuite	31 March 2025		
4.1	Provide targeted information to staff groups on welfare reform			Green	Ongoing community and partner engagement - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – quarterly and monthly
4.2	Respond to referrals from HSCP staff			Green	Ongoing case work
4.3	Produce a bi-annual Welfare Rights Newsletter			Green	Produced Summer 2024 Winter 2024

TP-5

CODE	TASK/MILESTONES	LED BY	PERIOD/DUE BY	STATUS	Outstanding actions / comments
TP-5	Promote Partnership Working	S. Tuite	31 March 2025		
5.1	Provide talks and briefings on welfare benefits/reform to community groups			Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – quarterly and monthly.
5.2	Participate in local partnership initiatives and events			Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team – quarterly and monthly
5.3	Work with the Ukrainian/Refugee Re-settlement group to ensure refugees are supported to maximise their income through benefit entitlement.			Green	Ongoing Bi-monthly meetings
5.4	Develop Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships in Argyll and Bute for a 2 year period from April 2023.			Green	Ongoing Funding due to end 31/03/2025. May continue with a tapered approach

TP-6

CODE	TASK/MILESTONES	LED BY	PERIOD/DUE BY	STATUS	Outstanding actions / comments
TP-6	Staff Training and Development	S. Tuite	31 March 2025		
6.1	Ensure induction programme completed for all new members of staff			Green	Ongoing as required
6.2	Encourage staff to attend relevant training courses			Green	Ongoing - Highlight report to L&R Management Team - quarterly
6.3	<p>Ensure staff delivering the service have the core competencies both generic and job specific to allow them to carry out their role competently.</p> <p>This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job descriptions • Relevant new and refresher training • Shadowing/peer support • one to ones • case management procedures • team meetings • Case reviews 			Green	Record of all staff training and hours completed held centrally in shared drive Evidenced through regular auditing of cases
6.4	Ensure accurate training records are held for each staff member.				Central spreadsheet staff responsible for updating own record and keeping evidence that training was completed. le invite email, diary entry, invoice , meeting minutes
6.5	Carry out quarterly supervision, "Career Conversations" and regular one to ones with all welfare Rights staff			Green	Supervision completed for 2023/24 "Career conversations" completed March 2024

CODE	TASK/MILESTONES	LED BY	PERIOD/DUE BY	STATUS	Outstanding actions / comments
					Supervision records held by SWRO next supervision due February 2025

TP-7

CODE	TASK/MILESTONES	LED BY	PERIOD/DUE BY	STATUS	Outstanding actions / comments
TP-7	Service Planning	S. Tuite	31 March 2025	Green	
7.1	Review community profile annually			Green	Annual reporting plus report specific advice needs produced April 2024. Going forward annual report will provide a more detailed breakdown of type II and III cases which will inform ongoing service planning.
7.2	Produce 3-5 year plan to anticipate future demand, advice patterns and availability of resources			Green	Recurring Annual meeting with Senior Welfare Rights Officer and Trading Standards Manager
7.3	Produce annual team service plan			Green	Recurring Annual meeting with Senior Welfare Rights Officer and Trading Standards Manager – completed 20/02/2024 Discussed and agreed at team meeting June 2024
7.4	Consult with service users regarding suitability of service users premises every 3 years			Green	Recurring Annual meeting with Senior Welfare Rights Officer and Trading Standards Manager – completed 20/02/2024

CODE	TASK/MILESTONES	LED BY	PERIOD/DUE BY	STATUS	Outstanding actions / comments
7.5	Review promotion of the service across all platforms. Website, Councils Facebook page, Cascade and promotional materials			Green	Ongoing throughout the year ST produce report Groups not reaching – hard to engage MAT 8 project
7.6	Review opening hours every 2 years			Green	Recurring Annual meeting with Senior Welfare Rights Officer and Trading Standards Manager – completed 20/02/2024