

# Think Poverty Sessions How-to Guide



This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

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<b>Title</b>	Think Poverty Sessions
<b>Organisation</b>	Falkirk Council (Fairer Falkirk Team)
<b>Category</b>	Promising Practice
<b>Poverty Impact</b>	Awareness
<b>Introduction to the Project</b>	
<p>The Think Poverty sessions were developed to highlight the impact living in poverty has on people's lives and wellbeing. These are online, interactive sessions where staff can discuss the reality of poverty in a judgement-free space. The sessions raise awareness of the impact poverty on the lives of local people, as well as the national big picture. While these sessions raise awareness of poverty, they also challenge the stigma surrounding it. By completing a budgeting activity, session participants place themselves in the shoes of people struggling to make ends meet. The sessions conclude with information for staff on where people can go for support.</p>	

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### Initial Idea

#### Who had the initial idea?

The idea originated from engagement work carried out as part of our poverty strategy- Towards a Fairer Falkirk. Discussion from people with lived experience of poverty highlighted how the stigma associated with poverty put them off from accessing services. We decided we needed to increase staff awareness and understanding of the challenges of living in poverty, and how they can help encourage people to take up advice and support.

#### How did the idea for the project come about?

Fairer Falkirk Manager attended a training course prior to the creation of the Think Poverty sessions. This training course asked participants to make difficult financial choices to allow participants to put themselves in the shoes of another struggling financially. From this experience, the Think Poverty sessions were created.

#### Did you draw on any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice you had seen elsewhere to inform your plans?

*If so, please add details to the box below.*

Joseph Rowntree Foundation research, Falkirk Council Reports, The Poverty Alliance work, Engender briefings for Scottish government, amongst others. As new reports and information come out the presentation is adapted to keep up with these changes.

#### Who was involved in developing the initial idea of the project?

The Think Poverty training sessions were developed by Jamie Kellas, a Fairer Falkirk team Graduate as part of his graduate programme. Jamie has now moved onto another role within the team but continues to lead delivery of parts of the sessions.

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**Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?**

Yes, as highlighted above the need for the programme arose from feedback from people with lived experience of poverty during the development of our anti-poverty strategy. They highlighted how the stigma of poverty and attitudes of public sector staff can put people off seeking help and claiming the benefits and support they are entitled to. The sessions were developed to address this issue

**What funding was used, if any, to support the development of the initial idea of the project?**

The sessions were developed and are delivered using staff resources without any further cost. Initial development was carried out as part of a graduate programme and ongoing development and delivery is carried out by the Fairer Falkirk team within Falkirk Council

**What in-kind resources were needed when developing the initial idea of the project?**

Facilities	N/A
Equipment	Microsoft Teams, PowerPoint
Local Knowledge	N/A
Food and Drink	N/A

**What, if any, barriers did you have to overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?**

The biggest challenge is getting staff and managers to see the value and commit staff time to attending the sessions. Providing a dedicated session to the Council’s senior leadership team was key to getting buy in from Directors and Heads of Service to encourage staff to attend the sessions. Further support from our Communications team has helped to highlight the sessions to staff.

**What, if anything, was helpful when developing the initial idea of the project?**



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Having time to develop the project was key, as was the ability to trial the session with colleagues who provided honest, critical feedback. Trialling the sessions enabled us to make the session more engaging and interactive.

### **What was the timeline between the initial idea and the start of the project?**

The initial idea was proposed in October 2020, trialled with colleagues in 2021, and fully rolled out in September 2022.

### **Who made the decision to introduce the project?**

Sally Buchanan, Library Service and Fairer Falkirk Manager.

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### Early Development of the Project

<b>Did you run a pilot project or carry out a feasibility study?</b>	
We held a pilot version of the training session to test it before general roll out for all staff.	
<b>What did you do? Please describe the pilot project or feasibility study.</b>	
We held a pilot version of the session for the Community Planning team to test out how it would work and get feedback from colleagues on what we could further improve. We then did a further test session with the new graduates at Falkirk Council. This allowed us to see how the sessions would work, work out any issues, and trial the budgeting activity. Colleagues from our training and development teams attended these sessions to provide feedback from a learning and development perspective.	
<b>Who was involved in the work of the pilot project?</b>	
Falkirk Council graduates for 2022. Community Planning team. Learning and development team.	
<b>How, if at all, were those with lived experience of poverty involved in the pilot of the project or feasibility study?</b>	
The session includes voices of people with lived experience of poverty via a 5-minute video clip from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. This clip is extremely powerful in addressing the myths around who experiences poverty and what poverty 'looks like'. Feedback from the pilot sessions confirmed the value of this clip and it continues to be a feature of the main sessions.	
<b>What funding was used, if any, for the pilot of the project or feasibility study?</b>	
The project has not used any resources other than staff time.	
<b>What in-kind resources were used for the pilot of the project or feasibility study?</b>	
<b>Facilities</b>	N/A
<b>Equipment</b>	Microsoft Teams, PowerPoint

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<b>Local Knowledge</b>	N/A
<b>Food and Drink</b>	N/A
<b>Was the pilot project or feasibility study evaluated? <i>If yes, please provide details</i></b>	
Yes, anonymous feedback was gathered from the attendees of the graduate pilot session	
<b>What evidence, if any, from the pilot project was used to confirm that it was working?</b>	
The feedback showed that the session was found to be informative, and that the budgeting activity worked as intended to convey the message we wanted.	
<b>Who made the decision to continue with the project beyond the pilot or feasibility study?</b>	
The sessions were highlighted to Council Executive Board as part of an update on tackling poverty and it was agreed these would be offered monthly to staff. Further to this, the board agreed that the sessions will be offered to Falkirk’s Community Planning Partnership as part of Challenge Poverty Week 2023.	
<b>How did the pilot or feasibility study inform the final design of the project?</b>	
The feedback gathered allowed us to improve our main takeaway message for the sessions. We revised the presentation to be less text heavy and more engaging for attendees. During the budgeting activity in the breakout rooms, we added in presentation slides to help with the delivery of the activity. Overall, piloting the sessions allowed us to make the presentation more engaging and the overall delivery of the session’s smoother.	

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### Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

**Is there a referral process? If yes, how does the referral process work (self-referral, referred by other agencies, identified from an existing database)**

This project is for council staff, not service users, so there is no referral process. However, staff can sign up for the training through admin support. The sessions are widely publicised on internal staff communications to encourage sign ups. Team managers are also contacted by the Fairer Falkirk Coordinator to encourage their staff directly to sign up for the sessions

**How are potential clients made aware of the project?**

The sessions are advertised on Falkirk Council's Yammer and on internal employee news channels. Managers are contacted directly by the Fairer Falkirk team to encourage their teams to take part

**How do you keep in touch with service users? Do your service users have a preferred method of contact?**

Attendees are sent the presentation and a follow up document after each session. The follow up document contains more information about support services and information available. Attendees are encouraged to stay in touch via email and through our dedicated Think Poverty Yammer group. Attendees are also added into mailing lists after each session.

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### Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

**Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in delivering the project? *If so, please describe below.***

No.

**Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in managing the project or project governance? *If so, please describe below.***

No.

**Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in any other aspect of the project? *If so, please describe below.***

The sessions prioritise lived experience by including a video from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation called 'This is Poverty'. The video features people living in poverty discussing the reality of life on a low income and the toll this has on their physical and mental wellbeing.

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### Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

<b>Who is responsible for managing the project?</b>
Fairer Falkirk team
<b>Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project? <i>If not please describe the manager's wider roles and responsibilities.</i></b>
The Think Poverty sessions are managed collaboratively by the Fairer Falkirk Team. The Fairer Falkirk Team is Falkirk Council's anti-poverty team, delivering funds, services, and strategy related to tackling poverty in Falkirk. This includes managing individual and community group funding, delivering the free period product service, and progressing our income maximisation strategy.
<b>Is there a Project Steering Group? <i>If yes, who is involved in this and how does it work.</i></b>
Insight from Falkirk Council's learning and development team was used to create the Think Poverty sessions. There are currently plans to roll out the sessions across the wider Community Planning Partnership
<b>If there is no Steering Group, what governance arrangements are in place to review strategy and performance?</b>
Feedback is gathered at the end of every session to inform how the sessions will develop and change as they continue to be delivered. The number of attendees at the sessions is reported to Council Executive and the Community Planning Partnership as part of our tackling poverty progress updates.

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### Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

**Is the project part of a wider anti-poverty strategy? *If so, please give details.***

The Think Poverty sessions are part of our wider income maximisation strategy. This strategy has four themes, one of which is 'knowledge'. Delivering the Think Poverty sessions to staff is a key aspect of improving knowledge and understanding of poverty and how to tackle it across the wider council.

The sessions aim to help tackle the stigma of poverty as part of the Fairer Culture theme of 'Towards a Fairer Falkirk 2019-2024' - the Council and Community Planning Partnership's poverty strategy.

**Is the project part of any other strategy? *If so, please give details.***

Yes, it contributes to achieving the vision of the Falkirk Council Plan 2022 – 2027 – Strong communities where inequalities are reduced and lives are improved, as well as the Community Planning Falkirk Plan poverty theme.

**Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment. *If so, please give details.***

No.

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### Funding

<b>Who funds the project? <i>Please give details.</i></b>
Falkirk Council.
<b>How much does the project cost?</b>
N/A
<b>Is future funding based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?</b>
No

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## Staffing and Resources

<b>Which paid staff are involved in delivering the project?</b>	
All members of the Fairer Falkirk Team are involved in delivering this project	
<b>Are volunteers involved in delivering the project? <i>Please describe their role and their contribution.</i></b>	
No	
<b>What in-kind resources do you need to deliver your project?</b>	
<b>Facilities</b>	N/A
<b>Equipment</b>	Laptops, Microsoft Teams, PowerPoint
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	N/A
<b>Food and Drink</b>	N/A
<b>For each of the in-kind resources listed above, who provides it?</b>	
<b>Facilities</b>	N/A
<b>Equipment</b>	Falkirk Council
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	N/A
<b>Food and Drink</b>	N/A
<b>Did you have to buy or develop new IT systems, software (databases, apps) or technology to deliver your project? <i>Please describe below.</i></b>	
No.	
<b>Was additional staff training required to deliver your project? <i>If so, please describe.</i></b>	
The Fairer Falkirk Team worked with the learning and development team to understand the best ways to deliver the presentation, and how to gather feedback..	



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## Monitoring and Evaluation

<b>What information, if any, do you collect about your project?</b>	
<b>Number of users</b>	Number of session attendees
<b>Profile of users</b>	N/A
<b>Experience of users</b>	N/A
<b>Anything else</b>	Feedback from attendees on what they thought of the sessions
<b>How often is data collected? Who collects the data?</b>	
This data is collected by the Fairer Falkirk team after every session.	
<b>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></b>	
N/A..	
<b>Do you produce an annual report? <i>Please provide details of what this includes.</i></b>	
No but the number of people attending and feedback from the session is reported to Council Executive and Community planning board as part of our regular tackling poverty updates.	
<b>In what ways, if at all, do you use the data that you collect to adapt the service that you provide?</b>	
Feedback about the sessions is used to improve the sessions for future attendees. Part of our feedback gathering focuses on awareness of services, so this information is used to improve how we publicise services through our internal staff communications..	
<b>Have you employed an external organisation to formally evaluate your project? <i>If yes, please provide details.</i></b>	



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No.

**Do you intend to employ an external organisation to evaluate the service that you provide in the future? *If yes, please provide details.***

No.

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### Reach and Impact

#### **What difference has the project made?**

The Think Poverty sessions have improved staff understanding of poverty and improved awareness of support information and services available. The budgeting activity in the sessions has made attendees more aware of the choices people living in poverty have to make. The sessions have challenged the stigma surrounding poverty, allowing staff more understanding and empathy when working with the public. The sessions have been delivered to the senior management team at Falkirk Council, encouraging cultural change throughout the organisation. The sessions have led to a growing community on our Think Poverty Yammer page, where staff post regularly about anti-poverty services and information. This helps to keep the conversation going and imbed anti-poverty initiatives in all the work the council does.

#### **How do you know this? What evidence demonstrates impact (metrics, interviews, feedback)?**

Feedback is gathered from staff at the end of each session using Microsoft Forms. Here we ask what attendees thought of the sessions, what further information around anti-poverty work they would like to know, and how long they have been a staff member at the council. From this feedback, we can see that the sessions have had a positive impact on attendees, often producing quite an emotional response. We are often told that the sessions are enlightening and challenge previous ways of thinking. The feedback consistently notes how informative the sessions are and raise awareness of services previously unknown to staff.

#### **To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?**

The project continues to be successful in improving staff knowledge of poverty. As more staff attend the sessions this will continue to improve. From the feedback we have received, the sessions have enhanced staff awareness of services around poverty and challenged stigma. As the project continues, we hope to involve more staff across the council, as well as third sector organisations and community groups.



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### **How, if at all, have conditions changed since the project was introduced?**

Since we started developing this project cost of living has increased considerably. This is expected to increase the number of people who experience poverty as well as exacerbate poverty for those already experiencing it. This means that these sessions are needed more than ever to make sure everyone understands poverty and how people can access help

### **If yes, has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand? *Please describe and explain below.***

Yes, the Fairer Falkirk Team have continuously updated the sessions to reflect changes in cost of living. This involves updating statistics to reflect 2023 reality and adapting the scenarios given in our budgeting activity to demonstrate real life choices being made every day by people on low income.

### **Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes? *If so, whether positive or negative, please describe.***

Due to the success of the initial phase of sessions delivered during Challenge Poverty Week in October 2022, the session was delivered to the senior leadership team at Falkirk Council in November 2022. This allowed us to directly influence leadership, including our Chief Executive Officer who frequently highlights addressing poverty as our number one priority as a council.

### **In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling child poverty? If so, please describe in what ways.**

As we increase awareness and understanding of poverty amongst staff this will in turn aide them to better support people they are engaging with, both through work and for friends, family and neighbours. The sessions highlight the particular challenges faced by single mothers and how they are disproportionately impacted by increasing cost of living. Having this understanding will help staff to target support to these families.

Additionally, in August 2023, the session will be delivered at the Heads of Establishment Forum in Falkirk. This will allow all heads of schools and nurseries in the Falkirk Council area to take part in the session and learn more about the support available for the families and children they work with.

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### Learning from Experience

<b>What is working well?</b>
The sessions are efficiently delivered monthly for staff across the council. They are engaging, informative, and challenge existing ways of thinking. Staff find the sessions worthwhile and helpful for improving knowledge and awareness.
<b>What, if anything, is working less well?</b>
It can be difficult to ensure full attendance at each session. However recent work with our Communications team has promoted the sessions more effectively resulting in increased numbers of attendees.
<b>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?</b>
Making staff aware that the sessions are going on and encouraging people to sign up has been a challenge. We would recommend engaging managers with the sessions themselves so that they can see directly the benefit of their staff taking part. From there, managers can request their staff to take part in the sessions, increasing overall attendance.
<b>What plans do you have to develop or expand the project in the future?</b>
We will deliver the session at Falkirk Education Services Heads of Establishment Forum, allowing all heads of schools and nurseries in the area to take part. We also plan to offer the sessions across our Community Planning partners during October 2023.
<b>How easily do you think your project could be replicated in another setting?</b>
The project could be easily replicated in any other local authority area. The statistics and life stories can be adapted for that context. The links to local support would need to be customised to other areas. Otherwise, the sessions are largely transferrable.

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