

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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North Ayrshire Single Shared Assessment Project (NASSA)



Title	North Ayrshire Single Shared Assessment (NASSA)
Organisation	North Ayrshire Council
Category	Promising
Poverty Impact	Prevention, mitigation, awareness, reduction
Introduction to the Project	
<p>The aim is to create a single process/point of contact to ensure customers get access to all their entitlements. The process will route the customer to the appropriate service/team to gain access to all entitlements and support(s), whilst enabling North Ayrshire Council (NAC) to capture data required for reporting purposes and for identifying those who may be eligible for future initiatives, by consenting to a new process that maximises entitlements.</p> <p>A Single Shared Assessment within North Ayrshire Council will inform decision making, providing our residents with assistance more quickly through a whole system approach offering immediate and longer-term support to lift people out of the cycle of poverty. This project seeks to ensure that the significant demand for financial support is delivered more effectively through streamlined referral pathways and a holistic approach to the provision of support across all three key drivers of child poverty by maximising use of data to target earlier intervention. If successful, this approach can then be upscaled at local authority level elsewhere.</p>	

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?

The idea as initiated from collaboration between different departments within North Ayrshire Council: Transformation, Customer Services, Child Poverty Lead.

How did the idea for the project come about?

Various projects and outcomes over the past couple of years have identified that it may be possible to improve North Ayrshire customers' access to the full suite of support that they are entitled to. Therefore, through the Accessing the Council programme agreed by NAC Executive Leadership Team in March 2022 they proceeded with two work streams (Financial Inclusion and Accessing Council Services). The findings from these workstreams emphasised the need to streamline access to means tested benefits and create a whole systems approach to access a wide range of support services via embedding a single contact model.

Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?

Plans / Reports: -

Council Plan 23-28 priorities – A Sustainable Council and Wellbeing. [Council Plan 2023 to 2028](#)

Digital Strategy 2023-2028. [Digital Strategy 2023 to 2028](#)

Child Poverty Action Plan 2023 [North Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan 2023](#)

Financial Inclusion Strategy 2023-2028 [North Ayrshire Financial Inclusion Strategy](#)

Performance Report CP 2019-24 progress update (year-end 22/23, 7.11.23) – [CP 2019-2024 Progress Update](#)

Research

Child Poverty Pathfinders – Glasgow, Dundee. [Supporting documents - Child poverty pathfinders - early implementation process: evaluation - gov.scot](#)

Local Authority research with the following: Argyll and Bute Council, Glasgow City Council, Dundee City Council, West Lothian Council, Fife Council, North Lanarkshire Council.

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Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?			
It was collaboration between Transformation, cross Council Services, No Wrong Door engagement with community planning partners, third sector organisations and lived experience customers.			
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?			
Yes – through the no wrong door engagement and accessing the council engagement.			
Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?			
No	✓	Yes	
Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?			
No		Yes	✓

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Please provide details of the resources that were required when developing the initial idea of the project.	
Staff/Volunteer Time	Strategic Leads: Leader of the Council, Elected Members, Executive Directors, Head of Service and Senior Managers. Collaboration between Transformation, Cross Council Services, No Wrong Door engagement with community planning partners, third sector organisations and lived experience customers.
Facilities / Workspace	Community Centres – No Wrong Door workshops Office locations – process redesign/consent discussion workshops Teams’ meetings – project progress updates
Equipment	Laptops, projectors, tv screens, flip charts and post-its.
Local Knowledge	Staff working within localities from NAC, HSCP, NHS and third sector partners/organisations.
Food and Drink	Tea, coffee, and tray bakes (no wrong door workshops).
What, if any, barriers had to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?	
Consent to use data. Service buy-in and culture change.	
What, if anything, helped enable development of the initial idea of the project?	
Buy-in from Customer Services – open to the joining up of services. Research into other Local Authority models and working with the Improvement Service.	

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How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?

Accessing our Council / Digital Workstream programme, which is part of NAC Transformation programme, has been a step change programme over a couple of years and the outcome from this has culminated in a number of ideas, including this one.

Who made the decision to introduce the project?

The project was presented to the Executive Leadership Team / Transformation Board in December 2023 who approved the progression of the project.

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Early Development – Pilot Project or Feasibility Study

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study?	
No	
Yes, a pilot project	✓
Yes, a feasibility study	
What did the pilot study or feasibility study involve?	
<p>To proceed forward with North Ayrshire Single Shared Assessment model various tests of change were set up, these include: -</p> <p>Corporate Referral Process - Tell us once process to access multiple support services via one contact form.</p> <p>SSA 1 – Create consent and update FSM (Free School Meals)/SCG (School Clothing Grant) process to enable the development of review process for term 25/26 and the ability to use customer data to assess for further entitlements. New process live from 05.06.24. Next steps: creation of review process for 25/26.</p> <p>SSA 2 – Bring together Council Tax discounts and exemptions into a single application form. 17 processes incorporated into one, new process live 13.09.24. Next steps: ongoing monitoring of performance of the new process. Continuing to work with the Service to streamline all contact for Council Tax via CRM (Corporate Relationship Management System).</p> <p>SSA 3 – Explore options to add detailed consent to all existing Customer Services means tested processes in scope to enable the use of customer data to carry out entitlements check. Requirements gathered, next steps: CRM development (on hold due to implementation of new CRM, this will be revisited summer 25).</p>	
Who was responsible for the design and/or delivery of the pilot or feasibility study?	
<p>Corporate Referral – Stakeholders from Employability, Financial Inclusion, CHAP, Homelessness, Digital Access and Skills, NAC Tenants Rent Arrears.</p> <p>SSA TOC 1 to 3 – Stakeholders from Customer Services, IT, Information Governance and lived experience customers.</p>	

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Were those with lived experience of poverty among those involved in the design or delivery of the pilot project or feasibility study			
			No
			Yes
<p>The lived experience group were involved in the initial approach to streamlining services. To date they have tested the FSM (Free School Meals)/SCG (School Clothing Grant) process, and time has been established to go through further tests of change processes (Council Tax Discount / Exemptions).</p> <p>A meeting was undertake with a new lived experience parent group on 15.01.25 through the Lennox Partnership, we provided an overview of the SSA project, listened to their experience of accessing means tested benefits, and current issues faced around cost of living. One of the main topics highlighted was issues around energy debt, lack of knowledge on supports available and eligibility. Along with the Lennox Partnership we have arranged a ½ day onsite session on 13.02.25 giving customers the ability to book an appointment to meet with Customer Service Team Leader who will help them apply for Energy Grant Fund along with advising on the other range of support(s) available.</p> <p>Going forward further meetings will be set up with the lived experience group when applicable to gain their feedback on any development to the new SSA model.</p>			
Was funding required to support the pilot project or feasibility study?			
		No	
		Yes	✓
Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the pilot project or feasibility study.			
Which organisation provided funding?		Scottish Government	
How much was required?		£79,180	
What was the specific source of funding?		Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund (CPAF)	

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Were specific resources needed to support the pilot project or feasibility study?			
No		Yes)	✓
Please provide details of the resources that were required for the pilot project or feasibility study.			
Staff/Volunteer Time	Project Manager (Full time) Business Improvement Officer (Part time, 17.5 hours)		
Facilities / Workspace	N/A		
Equipment	N/A		
Local Knowledge	N/A		
Food and Drink	N/A		
Was the pilot project or feasibility study evaluated?			
No			
Yes	✓		
<p>Quarterly CPAF (Child Poverty Accelerator Fund) meetings with the Scottish Government – 21.02.24, 05.06.24, 03.10.24, 21.01.25, 13.03.25.</p> <p>Progress updates CPAF participant group – 23.06.24 (update on challenges around data sharing / consent), 19.06.24 (Lessons Learned), 04.09.24 (Project review / progress to date)</p> <p>Child Poverty/Cost of Living Board Update – 17.04.24, 21.08.24.</p> <p>Transformation Board – 06.02.24, 23.04.24, 21.06.24, 19.08.24, 31.10.24, 16.01.25.</p> <p>Child Poverty Peer Support Network – SSA project / progress to date presentation to the group on 23.01.25.</p>			
Was there evidence from the pilot project or feasibility study that confirmed that it was working / it would work?			
No			
Yes	✓		
<p>Improving access to services, redesigning their services around customers versus sign posting to various services/organisations. Improving referral pathways, reducing customer contact and duplication of data collection.</p>			

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Who made the decision to continue with the project beyond the pilot or feasibility study?	
The North Ayrshire Council Transformation Board have agreed for the project to continue with the current deliverables.	
Was the design of the project modified following the pilot project or feasibility study?	
No	
Yes	✓
The project contains several tests of change, the outcome of which has shaped the way forward.	

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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Is there a referral process?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
<p>Currently, this process is available via all channels and can be submitted by the customers or referrer on the customer's behalf, i.e., Agency, Trusted person (Health Visitor, Social Workers) etc.</p> <p>Since the pilot launch in March 24, ongoing monitoring and review of the process has been undertaken, a workshop was carried out in November 24 with key stakeholders to provide an overview of the process performance, gather their feedback on how the process is working for them and identify opportunities for improvement. The process review highlighted that 29% of customer are requesting more than one support service at initial contact with the majority of customers requesting Financial Inclusion support (91%). The outcome from the workshop was to continue to monitor the process and undertake a process redesign workshop in May 25 to look at changing the process based on priority need.</p> <p>Following this work a communication plan will be created and approved to further roll out / embed the referral process within services of the council and all partners / third sector organisations.</p>		
Is referral the only way that potential clients are made aware of the project?		
	Yes	
	No	✓

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Other than referral, how do potential clients come to know about the project?

The new process has been embedded in the Council's [cost of living support services web page](#) and partnership websites (i.e., HSCP and Community Planning).

Customer Services provide a wide range of services to customers and can promote the new process where they feel the customer needs meet the requirements.

The key stakeholder services involved in the pilot promote the use of the new process. Financial Inclusion, Employability, Homelessness, Health and Wellbeing, Digital Access and Skills and NAC Tenant Rent Arrears support.

The wider promotion of the process has still to be planned, however with putting the form on our public website, [cost of living support page](#) and introducing the process to be used by our customer service staff, there has been a really good uptake by customers, NAC staff and third sector organisations. The promotion campaign will be planned after the process review / redesign has been completed. This process has removed the need for sign posting the customer to different services.

What is the most common way through which users typically access the service?

The website. Current figure represents 75% web to 25% via phone.

Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to service users?

No	
Yes	✓

Customer Services implemented customer satisfaction processes.

Regular promotion of services available communicated via Social Media channels.

For online services we have a website feedback process.

Ongoing engagement with our Lived experience parents group.

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?	
No	✓
Yes	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or project governance?	
No	✓
Yes	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project? <i>If so, please describe below.</i>	
No	
Yes	✓
Lived experience customers are involved in the review and redesign part of the process to ensure any new model is designed around the customers.	

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?		
Project Manager who reports into Senior Manager (Transformation)		
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?		
Yes		
No		✓
Full time for the first year, part-time for the remainder of the project. Other Transformation priorities (Digital Workstream)		
What proportion of the manager's overall workload is given over to this project?		
Most of it		
About half of it		✓
Just a small proportion of it		

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Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?	
No	
Yes	✓
SSA Project Team Project Sponsor – Elaine Nixon, Senior Manager (Customer Services) Sheila Paisly – Senior Manager (Transformation) Tony Riddick – Team Manager (Contact Centre) Natalie Spooner – Team Manager (Business Support) Michele Harvey – Operational Manager (Benefits) Lauren Lewis – Information Governance & Data Protection Manager Kay Robertson – Team Leader (Contact Centre) Susan Crancher – Senior Technology Officer Subject Matter Experts from Customer Services Tracy Simpson – Project Manager (Transformation) John Kennedy – Business Analyst (Transformation)	
Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?	
No	
Yes	✓
Child Poverty / Cost of Living and Transformation Board (Note: The Child Poverty / Cost of Living reports into the Community Planning Partnership Board).	

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

In your opinion, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓
<p>Scottish Government Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26 Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26 - gov.scot</p> <p>Council Plan 23-28 priorities – A Sustainable Council and Wellbeing. Council Plan</p> <p>Child Poverty Action Plan 2023 North Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan 2023</p> <p>Financial Inclusion Strategy 2023-2028 North Ayrshire Financial Inclusion Strategy</p> <p>Performance Report CP 2019-24 progress update (year-end 22/23, 7.11.23) – document link</p> <p>Our Council Plan Mid-year Progress report 23-24 – document link</p> <p>Our Council Plan Year-end Progress report 23-24 – document link</p> <p>Annual Performance Report 23-24 – document link</p>	
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	
Don't know	✓
No	
Yes	
Is the project part of any other strategy?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓
This project is also linked to our Digital Strategy 2023 to 2028	

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In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this strategy?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓
The digital process has provided streamlined access via one contact form to multiple services and utilises our Corporate Technology.	
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	
No	
Yes	✓
Administering Local Authority means tested benefits	
In your opinion, what has been the impact on the project of having this statutory commitment?	
Don't know	
None	
Negative	
Positive	✓
There was recognition from Customer Services that means tested processes could be delivered in a more streamlined way.	

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Funding

Has external funding been secured to support the work?	
No	
Yes	✓
Please provide details of the external funding that was used secured to support this work?	
Which organisation provided funding?	Scottish Government
What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?	Fairer Futures Partnership (Key contacts: Stewart Robbie / Donna Martin)
How much funding was secured?	£348k
For how long has funding been secured?	Over 2 Financial Years – to continue the progression and improvement of the NASSA
Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓

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Is future funding from the same external source based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered from this work?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
<p>The main objectives of the Grant are:</p> <p>To implement the North Ayrshire Fairer Futures Partnership, which includes the ongoing development and integration of the 'single shared assessment project' which targets and maximises support to families most at risk of experiencing poverty (including the priority groups set out in Best Start, Bright Futures), with a view to supporting families out of poverty on a sustained basis.</p> <p>To promote collaborative relationships and partnership working across Community Planning Partnership partners and Third Sector organisations. And take a multi-disciplinary approach to maximise impact, identify solutions and system changes which improve access and efficiencies in the short-term, with longer-term aim of improving outcomes.</p> <p>Utilise quality improvement methodology to work in partnership with services and partners to co-design, test, scale and spread a 'No Wrong Door' way of working.</p> <p>To progress with the development of a test of change, based in an area of North Ayrshire with significant levels of deprivation, to pilot the wrap-around of services and partner agency support that can help families most at risk of experiencing poverty.</p> <p>To support extraction of learning around how system change is implemented and sustained and individuals/families experiencing poverty and disadvantage can be better supported.</p> <p>To promote and support transformational change within organisations and partners to support the shift to more person-centred and holistic delivery of support services.</p> <p>To promote and share learning and evidence from this work through Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Place Based National Learning Network to support others taking similar approaches in other local areas.</p>		
Has a specific sum been secured from the host organisation to support this work?		
	No	✓
	Yes	

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Please provide details of the funding that was used secured from the host organisation to support this work?	
How much funding was secured?	
For how long has funding been secured?	
Is future funding from the host organisation a possibility?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	
Is future funding from the host organisation based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?	
No	
Yes	
What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?	
<p>To continue to streamline access to means tested benefits administered by the local authority. NAC would utilise shared learning / experience and evaluate outcomes from the tests of change which would lead to future business case to continue to develop and embed the model within our organisation and communities.</p> <p>To further utilise our data assets to target unmet need to ensure our customers are applying for their entitlements.</p>	

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from the host organisation contribute toward the work of this project as part of their broader work for the organisation?			
		No	
		Yes	✓
The project is part of Developing our Data Assets Workstream.			
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?			
		No	✓
		Yes	
Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?			
		No	✓
		Yes	
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project?			
		No	✓
		Yes	
Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?			
No	✓	Yes	

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Please provide details of the resources that are required to deliver the project?	
Facilities / Workspace	
Equipment	
Local Knowledge	
Food and Drink	
Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?	
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?

No

Yes



The new processes has been developed in NAC's Corporate CRM (Customer Relationship Managment) system. This is the Council's Corporate System for recording and management of customer enquiries.

To date for the SSA (Single Share Assessment) project following has been actioned / developed in CRM: -

FSM (Free School Meals)/SCG (School Clothing Grant) process updated with customer consent, household information, and capture data in relation to Child poverty priority groups.

Created a new process for Corporate Referral, one contact form that is routed to multiple support services.

Created a single application process for applying for Council Tax discounts / exemptions.

Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?

No

Yes



Ongoing training in a council-wide holistic approach. Embed a No Wrong Door approach across Council Services.

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?	
No	
Yes	✓
Baseline of means tested benefits paid out. Number of applicants applied for specific means tested processes.	
Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?	
Yes	✓
No	
Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project?	
SSA project team and Customer Services	
How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation?	
Monthly by project team	
Next steps to create a tackling poverty data dashboard to be monitored and reviewed by key stakeholders i.e Customer Services, Child Poverty Strategy Team etc.	
What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to impact of the project?	
The 'no wrong door' (encompassing the NASSA) approach is in effect in all front facing department of NAC to ensure that no matter the initial point of contact the customer is referred to the correct department.	

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What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?				
Number of users	Yes	✓	No	
Profile of users	Yes	✓	No	
Experience of users	Yes	✓	No	
Outcomes for users	Yes		No	✓ (Not at this stage)
Anything else	Yes		No	✓
Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?				
			No	
			Yes	✓
<p>From the FSM (Free School Meals)/SCG (School Clothing Grant) process NAC have reviewed the consent process and have been adapting this going forward.</p> <p>Corporate Referral Process. NAC updated the household composition category to streamline the options.</p>				
Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?				
			No	✓
			Yes	
Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of project in the future?				
Don't know / no current plans				
			No	✓
			Yes	

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Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	
Don't know / no current plans	
No	
Yes	✓

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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?	
Fully met	
Making progress toward meeting Aims	✓
Not making progress	
What difference has the project made?	
<p>From an internal perspective the NASSA project team are fully collaborating with Customer Services teams to make it easier for the customer to apply for services.</p> <p>Through data and consent NASSA project team now have further understanding of applicants who are applying for Free School Meals / SCG (School Clothing Grant) and access to support services (Financial Inclusion, Employability etc.)</p>	
Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?	
No	✓
Yes	
Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?	
No	✓
Yes	
In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?	
No	
Yes	✓
NASSA is in an early stage. However, there are plans on how to use process to target unmet need.	

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?

Some things which are working well include:

Collaboration with customer services and other key stakeholders.

Working with Information Governance to ensure they are data protection compliant.

Working with IT to develop a test of change model.

Meeting with their Lived Experience customers to gain their feedback.

Working with CPAF (Child Poverty Accelerator Fund) participants to gain information on their project experience / journey.

Working with Scottish Government and Improvement Service representatives.

What, if anything, is working less well?

This project has been approached as a test of change and stakeholders have bought into this approach to date. However, it will need to be revisited for future phases.

What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?

Key learning points expressed:

It is key to get the consent process signed off by Information Governance and relevant key stakeholders.

Tests of change have enabled NAC to move forward within a complex environment.

You need to have service buy in and key stakeholders to influence change.

Engagement with lived experience customers to ratify any new processes.

Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?

No	
Yes	✓

To extend to other services within the Council which administer means tested entitlements.

How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?

Conceptually all Local Authorities deal with the same administration of means tested entitlements therefore could learn from this project.

Implementation of this change for others will require stakeholders' engagement and buy-in.

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Tackling Poverty Locally Online Directory

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SSA Project Timeline – Update Feb 25



Corporate Referral Stats – 11.03.24 to 04.02.25

340 forms submitted = 489 referrals

- 44% of requests were from a single adult household.
- 91% of customers requested Financial Inclusion support.
- 70% required one support service / 30% required more than 1 support service.

FSM / SCG Stats – 05.06.24 to 04.02.25

4,943 applications submitted

- 3,753 applications processed = 70% FSM & SCG, 30% SCG only.
- 62% of applications received were from single parent households.

Council Tax Discount / Exemptions – 13.09.24 to 04.02.25

480 forms submitted

- 311 (65%) Personal Discount / Exemptions of which 78% were Student discount / exemptions.
- 169 (35%) Property Discount / Exemptions of which 63% unoccupied / unfurnished exemption.

Funded by



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Next Steps

