



**EXCELLENCE IN
INNOVATION
(SERVICE DELIVERY)**

Argyll & Bute Council in partnership
with Bute Advice Centre, Allenergy
and the Community Food Forum

Flexible Food Fund Project

Supporting Communities Across
Argyll & Bute

The Flexible Food Fund Project was set up to help mitigate against the hardships suffered by those on low incomes as a result of the pandemic. To meet the criteria recipients need to be on a low income, with no access to savings. An advertising campaign raised awareness, with many individuals making applications and benefitting from the holistic package of support made available. The grant award is based on the size of the household with payments starting at £80 and rising to £530 for the first payment. In order to receive a second payment of the same amount, engagement must take place with Bute Advice Centre. When a welfare rights check has been carried out to maximise income, a referral is then offered with ALIenergy where energy advice and support is provided. To date **734 households** have been supported with over **£1 million** of support through advice, grants, rebates and benefits.

While client gain is indicative of success, there are many successes that can't be quantified in money. An example is helping an individual to access a blue badge and parking space outside their home. This can be life enhancing but have no monetary value. Staff are keen to help in the way that is most appropriate for the client.

In order to enhance the numbers applying in the more rural locations, it was agreed under the Flexible Fund, that staff from Bute Advice Centre and ALIenergy would travel to outlying areas and publicise the services available. Meetings were arranged with health professionals, housing support, foodbanks to name only a few. Encouraging agencies working with households who are on a low income with no access to savings, to help their clients engage with the project.

Thank you to everyone who allowed us to take their photographs for publicity.

Adverts of the project have gone out on local face-book pages to all the communities covered by the roadshow. Further events will be taking place in areas where numbers are lower. Staff are keen to encourage all who meet the criteria to make use of the project.

Staff have worked particularly closely with local foodbanks in the region.

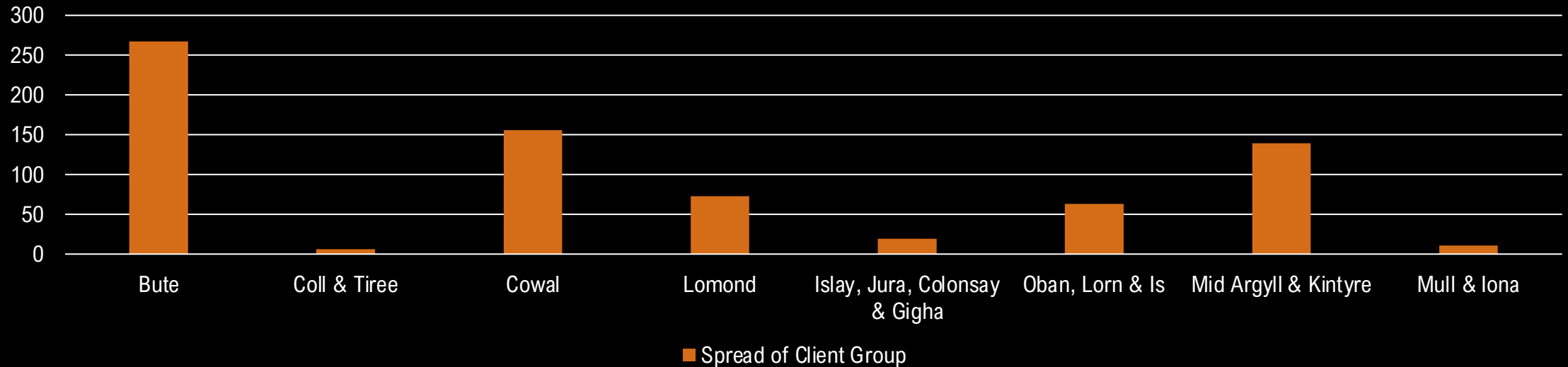


Flexible Food Fund

734 cases supported from the launch on 11th January 2021 to end of Oct 2021

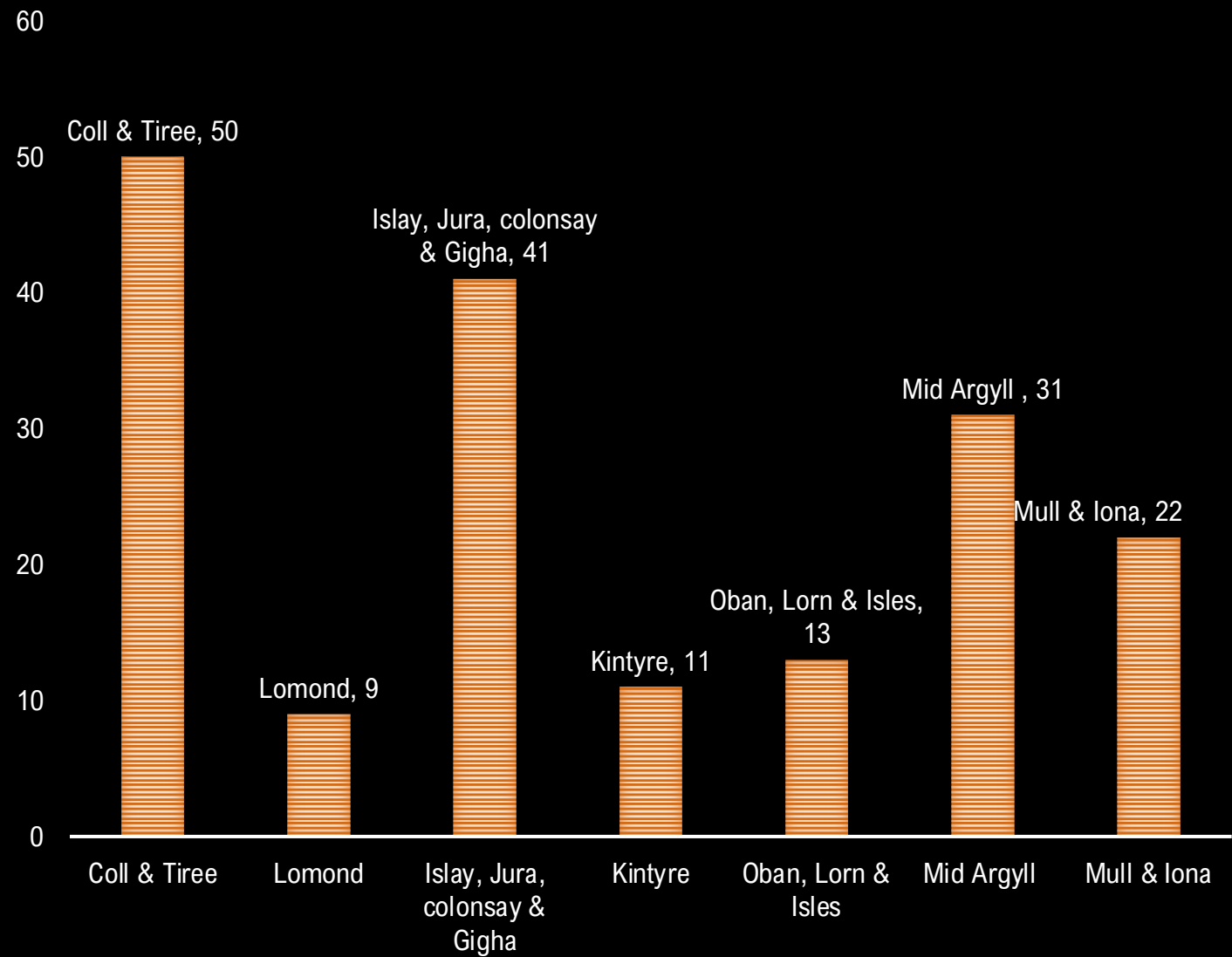
Monthly meetings take place between representatives of the foodbanks (Mary McGinley of Helensburgh & Rosneath Foodbanks, Anne Clark of Dunoon Foodbank and Ewan Baxter of Mull Community Fridge), Fergus Walker Revenue & Benefits Manager with Argyll & Bute Council, Jayne Jones Commercial Manager with Argyll & Bute Council and Bute Advice Centre Manager Julie Semple, where an interchange of information takes place and partnership working is enhanced. The issues raised are then shared with all of the Community Food Forum members. The chart below outlines the spread of clients across the region, with areas of higher deprivation according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation statistics, reflecting higher numbers of cases, namely Rothesay, Dunoon and Campbeltown.

Spread of Client Group Across the Region



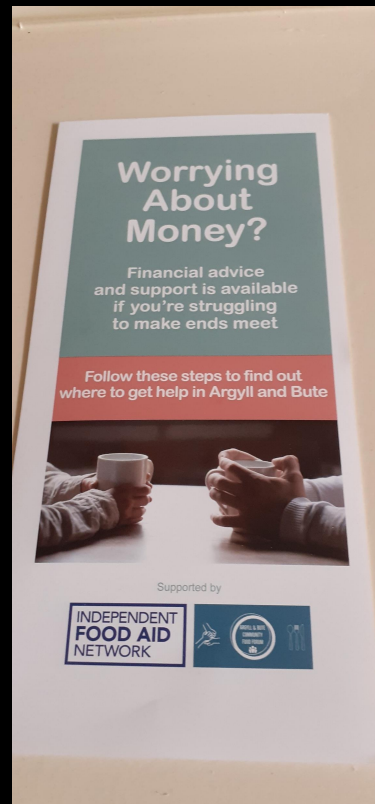
Roadshow Areas

The chart shows the o/o increase of recipients across each of the areas since the start of the roadshows. Bute & Cowal were not included in the roadshow as the initial publicity campaign resulted in high numbers of applications. The purpose of the roadshow was to highlight the project in areas where numbers were lower. In lower population areas it is reasonable to assume that numbers will be lower, however we were keen that those in more rural locations will have the same parity of service delivered in larger towns. Staff are still keen to hear from any agency or individual who could benefit from the project.



Bute Advice Centre and the Community Food Forum worked alongside the Independent Food Aid Network on the Money Worries leaflet. The leaflet promoted all the advice services available in Argyll & Bute. The leaflet also highlighted the Flexible Food Fund and this was used as a tool when networking with partner agencies. The leaflets were then left with partners to distribute to their client base.

Alongside the leaflets ALIenergy Cozy kits were also promoted.



FLEXIBLE FOOD FUND ROADSHOW

The Flexible Food Fund is a grant that is being processed by Argyll & Bute Council to support families and individuals who are on a low income and without savings. Recipients can be in or out of work and benefit from a two part grant that ranges according to the size of the household. For some larger families it can be as much as £1000+.

In order to access the second part of the grant recipients must engage with Bute Advice Centre who are working in partnership with ALIenergy delivering welfare rights, money and energy advice.

Advisers are keen to engage with agencies/individuals who support low income households to promote uptake of this grant and support services. Staff will be visiting these areas over the next few weeks and are keen to set up meetings.

Please get in touch with juliesample@buteadvice.org.uk or rachel@alienenergy.org.uk to set up an appointment or call

01700 502784

Bute Advice Centre

Argyll & Bute Council

Supporting Communities Across Argyll & Bute

24th Aug - Islay
25th Aug - Jura
1st Sept - Cligha & Lochgilphead
6th Sept - Mull
7th Sept - Iona
29th Sept - Oban
30th Sept - Tiree
1st Oct - Coll
4th Oct - Colonsay
12th Oct - Kintyre
1st Nov - Helensburgh
2nd Nov - Rosneath & Arrochar

Islay & Jura

As Islay is one of the larger islands, 2 members of the BAC team and 2 members of the ALIenergy team, visited over 24/25 August, meeting with staff from NHS (health visitors), social work, Carr Gomm, Islay foodbank, We Are With You staff, ministers, energy trust, development trust, schools and the Council Leader. Leaflets were distributed across all the filling stations, leisure centre, local shops, Illeach Newspaper, cyber café, housing associations, GP surgeries and care centre. A total of 520 leaflets were distributed.



Mid-Argyll & Gigha

On 1st Sept 2 members of BAC and 1 member of ALIenergy visited. On Gigha staff visited the energy trust and the local shop, delivering leaflets to residential housing at the ferry terminal and the local church. Meetings were also held with local Councillors, Argyll & Bute CAB, Pantry Foodbank and Carr Gomm staff. 390 leaflets were distributed.



Mull & Iona

On 6th & 7th September 2 members of BAC and 1 member of ALIenergy attended, visiting included health visitors, schools (Tobermory High School agreed to take 250 leaflets to distribute to all children) and midwives. Leaflet drops were also made in housing association homes, ferry ports, community café, churches, GP surgeries, police station and post office, local shops throughout, the Abbey and phone boxes. In all 600 leaflets were distributed.



Oban, Coll & Tiree

2 staff from BAC and 2 staff from ALIenergy attended on 29th September -1st Oct meeting in Oban with Hope Kitchen Foodbank, Youth Café, Healthy Living Network Coordinator and ACHA staff, social work and a sheltered housing complex. They also met with community trust members, community rural centre staff, ensuring leaflets at GP surgeries, local shops, post offices, Tiree Airport, petrol stations, public phone boxes, cafes and community shops. Over 400 leaflets were distributed.



Colonsay

2 members of BAC and 2 members of ALIenergy attended the island on 4th October and successfully met with staff at the service point, village store, local café and hotel, Colonsay Church and health professionals (local GP and District Nurse). Leaflet drops were made at the fire station, ferry terminal, local art shop and heritage centre. In all 150 leaflets were distributed.



Kintyre

2 members of the BAC team and 1 member of the ALIenergy team visited on 12th October and met with staff from Link Club, ACHA, Kintyre Foodbank and Carr Gomm. Leaflets were also distributed to the GP surgery and NHS Community Health Centre and The Hub. 200 leaflets were distributed.



Lomond Area

2 members of the BAC team and 1 member of the ALleenrgy team visited on 1st and 2nd November, meeting with members of the Helensburgh Foodbank, Carr Gomm, Jeans Bothy and Garelochhead Station Trust, leaflets were also distributed at the medical centre and with social work. In all 300 leaflets were distributed. BAC were also able to provide 40 childrens play packs supplied by Historic Scotland to the Helensburgh Foodbank.



Survey of Clients

From November 21 staff are endeavouring to capture feedback from clients who have used the service with regard to the impact on their mental health and well being. Numbers are limited, however from the completed forms so far the following results have been recorded.

When asked if BAC or ALIenergy were able to maximise their income or alleviate fuel poverty:

75% answered YES 0% answered NO and 25% answered No they were not entitled to any more benefits however they were now more informed.

When asked if they felt their mental health had improved as a result of working with an adviser:

91.67% answered YES 0% answered NO and 8.33% remained the same

When asked how their mental health had improved, the following statements were made:

“A great support (God send) and a weight off my mind”

“Moving home, need all the help financially I can get, they were very friendly”

“Instantly put at ease, was extremely nervous. Couldn’t have done it without my adviser”

“Peace of mind there is somewhere I can get help as I struggle to read and understand letters”

“Dealing with my rent arrears has eased my anxiety”

“My benefits are now sorted re: housing costs but my mental health is still suffering”

“My debt worries have eased as someone else is helping me”

Since the launch and later in August 2021 when the roadshow began, it has been the privilege of Bute Advice Centre and ALIenergy staff, to meet with so many hospitable individuals who have embraced the project and have committed to raising awareness of the Flexible Food Fund collaboration. As we have met with NHS staff, teachers, housing support staff, foodbank staff, project workers, social workers and many more we have been met with positivity. It is reassuring to have a project they can point clients towards, regardless of where they live, to get the holistic service the project delivers. As winter 2021 approaches it continues to be vital to target those who are still unaware of the project or feel they wouldn't qualify.

Huge thanks goes to Fergus Walker and Jayne Jones and the team for processing payments and ensuring all those who engage with advice services get their second payments.

The combination of welfare rights and money advice from BAC alongside the essential fuel poverty advice and support available from ALIenergy, makes for a full package of support and is available to anyone who lives in Argyll & Bute. Each roadshow trip was full of successful engagements, however we are aware that there will be many organisations we have yet to reach out to. Should any individual feel that they or someone they know would benefit from the grant or support with welfare rights or energy issues, please don't hesitate to get in contact with Kim Parry, Bute Advice Centre Administrator, on 01700 502784. Kim will ensure an appointment is made with a Welfare Rights Officer at no cost to the client. All clients will be offered a referral to Rachel McNicol, Asst Manager at ALIenergy and a member of her qualified team will be ready to support. Should documentation need to be sent out and returned Bute Advice Centre or ALIenergy will send out stamped addressed envelopes. It is vital that no-one is precluded from the service.

The close partnership working between Argyll & Bute Council staff, Bute Advice Centre and ALIenergy has ensured that those cases who are receiving the Flexible Food Fund grant are part of a robust system that ensures maximum support for the client.

The Community Food Forum members have all embraced the FFF programme and placed leaflets within the food packages. 2000 leaflets created by Argyll & Bute Council were distributed earlier in the year and since then a further 6000 are in the process of being distributed through the roadshows and work done primarily by the foodbanks.

It is the hope of everyone involved in the project that the support package will relieve poverty and distress in communities right across Argyll & Bute. Staff remain vigilant as we enter the winter period and urge everyone to share information about the project with those they know. Recipients can be assured they will be dealt with in a respectful, dignified confidential way.