



North Coast Community Conversations

and online engagement update June 2026

**COMMUNITY
LEARNING &
DEVELOPMENT**



North Ayrshire
Community Planning Partnership



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Setting the scene

**COMMUNITY
LEARNING &
DEVELOPMENT**



For 2025/2026, the development of the North Coast Locality Plan focuses on:

- Empowering the community to drive local priorities
- Mental health, social inclusion and reducing poverty
- Supporting skills and work opportunities
- Building capacity via an ideas bank of community-led proposals
- Improving access to financial services

Guided by North Coast Locality Partnership, the team has held regular public meetings to shape action plans and a series of North Coast Community Conversation engagement sessions have taken place in early 2026 to identify new collective actions and take them forward.

Public and online engagement

During March - April 2026, North Coast residents were invited to Community Conversations to share their views, concerns and hopes for the next North Coast Locality Plan. During these, valuable qualitative data was captured via Sensemaker to provide analysis, identify key themes and inform next steps...

1,200 community statements were captured from community groups at a combination of in-person and online sessions.

Some of the community groups and organisations included:

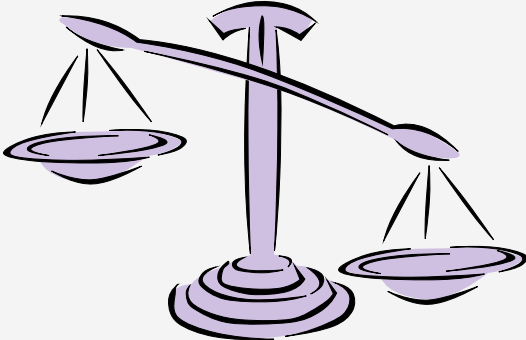
- North Coast Youth Forum
- Clyde Coast and Cumbraes Men's Shed
- Skelmorlie Youth Group
- Largs SWI
- West Kilbride Youth Group - including primary school representation
- Largs Academy
- North Ayrshire Libraries
- Online Engagement via the Shaping North Ayrshire website



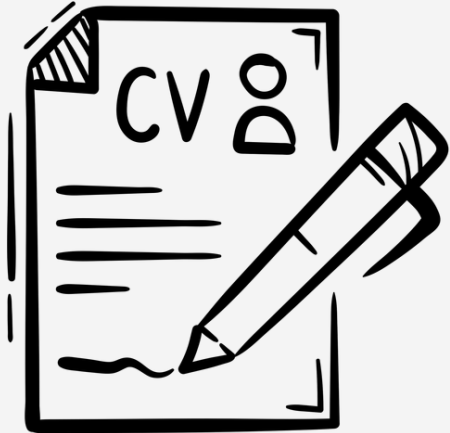
Shaping priority actions for the North Coast Locality Plan 2026/27

Key themes explored:

Community Conversations held, highlighted the following key priorities:



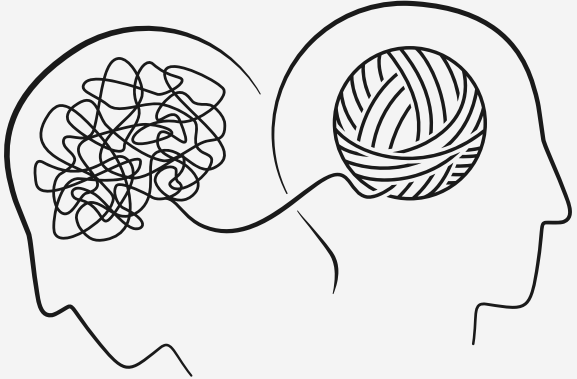
Poverty & Cost of Living



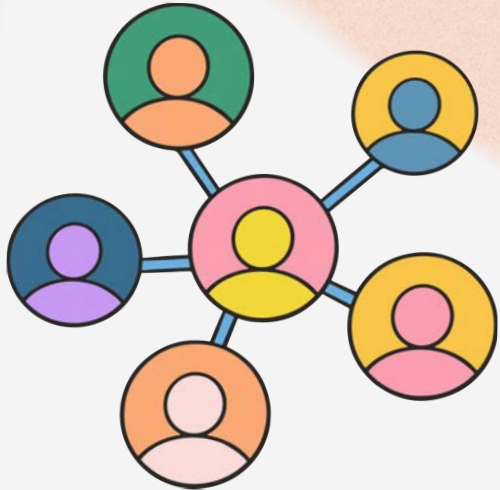
Skills, work & employability



Social inclusion & community connection



Mental wellbeing



Community ideas & solutions

How our communities are impacted

What the Poverty and Stigma analysis tells us:

Analysis shows that day-to-day financial pressure is a concern, particularly for families, children and young people.

The most significant pressures are food costs, household bills, heating, transport and school-related expenses. Many people are aware of food support but do not use it due to stigma.

Effective responses to Poverty and Stigma:

- Focus on dignity, accessibility and prevention
- Improve awareness and presentation of support
- Link financial help with wellbeing, skills and social connection

We are committed to shaping our revised North Coast Locality Plan to do exactly this and empower our residents to overcome the barriers they currently face.



What the Skills, Work and Employability analysis tells us:

In the North Coast, **there is a strong desire to learn, work and progress**, alongside significant structural barriers.

So what is getting in the way? Well, a lack of awareness of opportunities, low confidence, limited experience and the cost of training, transport and access to digital equipment is preventing our residents from being able to realise their full potential.

People want practical, confidence-building training such as:

- CV writing and interview skills
- Vocational and trade skills
- Digital skills
- First Aid and Mental Health First Aid
- Cooking, life skills and creative skills

We are committed to continuing to providing access to these pathways, because we understand that wellbeing and employability are connected, not separate.

Skills and employability support must be local, affordable and well-publicised. It should be flexible, delivered around real-life pressures and alongside confidence and wellbeing support.



What the Social Inclusion and Community Connection analysis tells us:

The Social Inclusion analysis shows that **connection happens through belonging, shared activities and feeling heard**, not just through services alone.

Key Insights:

- Many people, especially young people, do not participate in community groups due to confidence, anxiety or lack of awareness
- There is a strong demand for youth-friendly spaces to socialise
- Informal social, creative and arts spaces (indoors and outdoors) are desired
- Existing groups such as youth clubs, Men's Sheds, sports and art groups are highly valued where they are available

This means, that a **key priority will be to increase social inclusion in the North Coast by providing low-pressure and welcoming opportunities, informal and interest based spaces and support for residents with low confidence or anxiety.**



What the Mental Health and Wellbeing analysis shows us

The Mental Wellbeing analysis shows that **when it comes to mental wellbeing, access, culture and awareness matter** as much as services themselves. Currently there are a number of key barriers including:

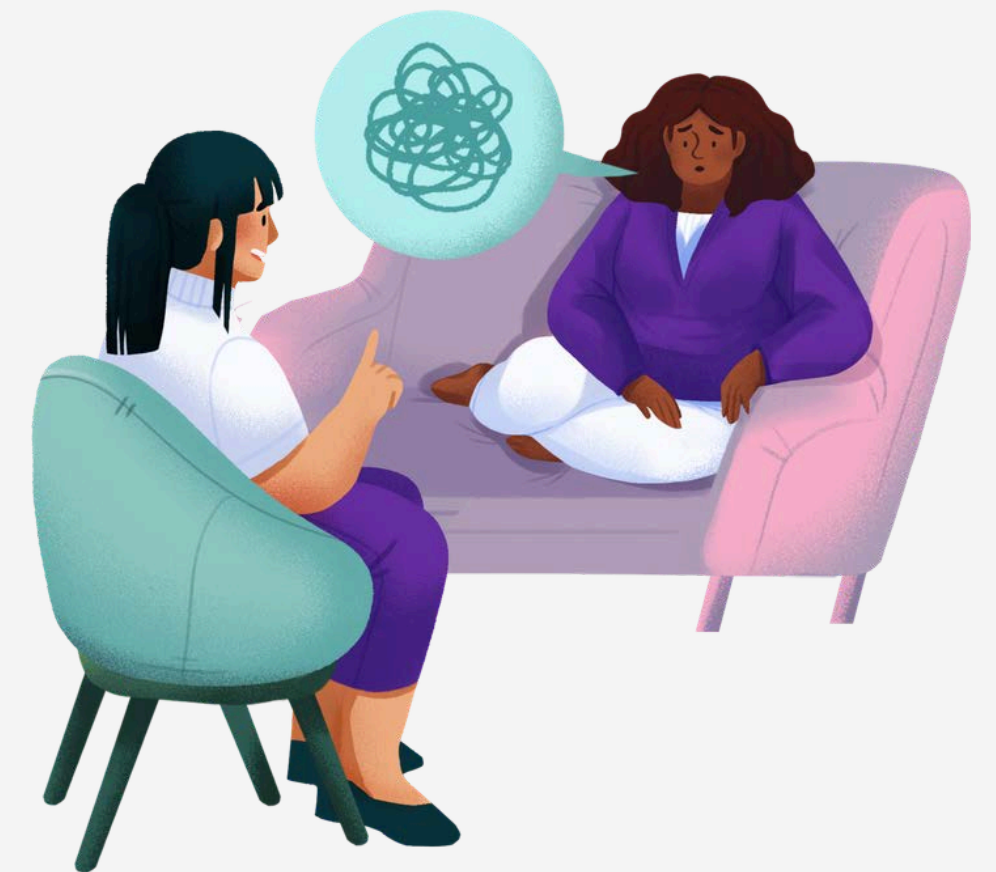
- Poor signposting and lack of awareness
- Fear of judgment, embarrassment and stigma
- Concern about not being listened to or understood
- Practical barriers such as transport, time and opening hours

What people want are calm and quiet spaces, creative activities such as art and music, outdoor and nature-based opportunities and affordable access to physical activity and animal-assisted activities.

Safe and informal places to talk to someone are really important too.

For us to improve overall wellbeing in the North Coast, the support we seek to provide must be:

- Visible, normalised and stigma-free
- Community-based and preventative
- Integrated with social and creative activity



**Mental
health
matters**

Access to Financial Services analysis

The Financial Services analysis has highlighted how **loss of local access to financial services in the North Coast has increased stress and exclusion.**

Current landscape: Bank closures have reduced access to in-person support, particularly affecting older people and those who struggle digitally. Now, people are relying heavily on friends, family, charities and community organisations for advice.

Strong support already exists for:

- Local, face-to-face financial help
- Friendly, approachable staff
- Clear, simple information
- Flexible access times
- Money help groups and combined advice hubs

One of our key North Coast priorities will be to increase the visibility of the financial support available and support our partners to integrate with other local wellbeing and community support for a local, trusted and easy to navigate support service when it comes to financial support for older residents.



Working together with communities

Community ideas and solutions

During the recent community engagement in the North Coast, residents, partners and local community groups were encouraged to contribute to a Bank of Ideas about what they wanted to see in their community.

The Bank of Ideas analysis demonstrates that communities are already thinking in joined-up, preventative ways.

Some of the ideas that we would like to help take forward are:

- Community cookery schools linking food, skills and wellbeing
- Local repair and skills-sharing initiatives
- Wellbeing activities that create volunteering and employment pathways
- Free or low-cost activities for children and young people

These ideas align strongly with the Community Planning Partnership's strategic priorities around prevention, inclusive growth and North Ayrshire Council's Community Wealth Building strategy.



Headline messages

as a result of the North Coast Community Conversations

01. Expand on what we have already

Local people are remarkably consistent. They are not asking for dozens of new services – they are asking us to work together to fix a small number of big, structural issues.

04. Community spaces as lifelines

Community spaces are lifelines – they provide food, social contact, activities, volunteering and a sense of belonging, particularly for older adults and families under stress.

02. The barrier of transport

Transport is the single biggest cross cutting barrier – it limits access to work, college, parks, hospitals, youth activities, larders, community groups and mental health support.

05. Visibility is everything

Communities want to access support but they don't know where to find it and how to get there... the promotion and visibility of the North Coast offering needs to be improved.

03. Poverty pressures

Cost of living and poverty pressure everything – food insecurity, rising costs and in work poverty mean families are dropping out of social and learning opportunities.

06. Social inclusion and connection

To improve mental health and wellbeing, people want to feel like they belong via shared interest-based community spaces and groups where they can connect with others who have shared interests.

07. Practical skills for life and employment

People want to gain confidence by developing their digital, employability and life skills via supported pathways, training and jobs.

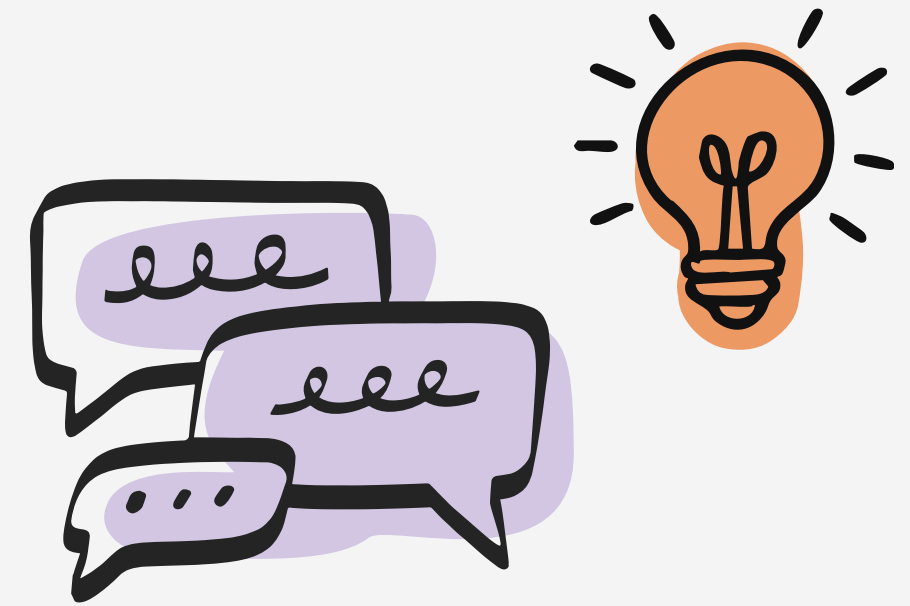


08. Face-to-face matters

With the recent closure of local banks, face to face trusted advice matters and this should remain a key area of focus.

Cross-cutting core messages

Across all themes, the same core messages emerge:



People want dignity, connection and opportunity, not crisis responses alone



Confidence, stigma and fear of judgment prevent people from seeking help



Poverty, wellbeing, skills and social inclusion are deeply interconnected



Local, face-to-face and trusted support matters, especially following service and bank closures



Awareness & navigation are major barriers – services exist, but people don't know how to find or use them



Communities are not short of ideas – they clearly describe practical, preventative solutions!



Implementation Planning

Planning and ongoing engagement will be key to our success to create a new, inclusive and representative North Coast Locality 2026/27 Action Plan.

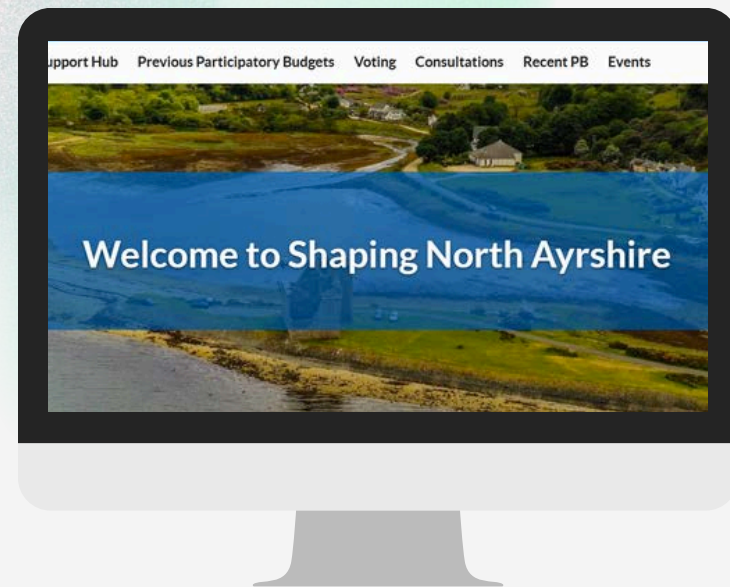
We will work together with the community and partners to:

- **Define timelines** and expected outcomes
- **Identify pilots** for quick implementation
(e.g., skills workshops, wellbeing sessions, pop up larders)
- Establish **regular community voice forums**
- Continue capturing **lived experience** insight
- **Evaluate early projects** and adjust through co-design



Community Feedback loop

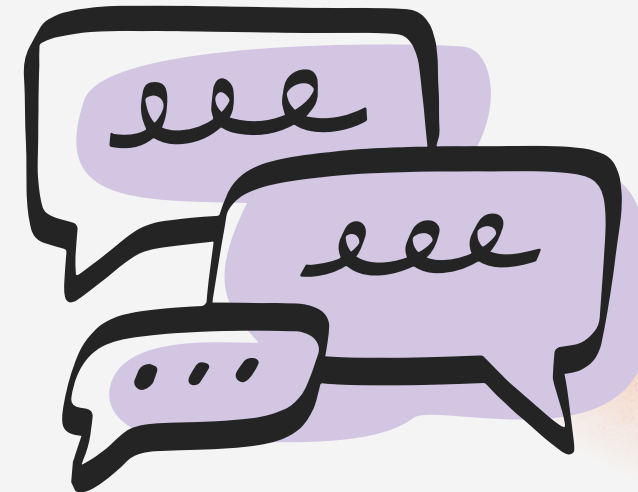
Keeping you updated is our priority. Over the coming months, the North Coast Locality team will:



Share outcomes on the Shaping North Ayrshire website



Provide updates through community centres, social media, and newsletters



Continue dialogue through ongoing Locality Network Meetings and Community Conversations

Evaluation findings



As a result of engaging with communities and gathering feedback, the North Coast Locality Community Conversations conclude the following:

- Local trusted spaces work best
- People value dignity over charity
- Confidence matters as much as capability
- Information gaps are systemic
- Cost, transport and access shape behaviour

These findings point to the need for better coordination, not simply more services and reinforce the prioritisation of the importance of ongoing dialogue with communities, partners and services.

All of the above aligns with Community Learning and Development (CLD) principles of participation, empowerment, and partnership working, and provides assurance that our feedback and analysis approach taken was both effective and impactful.

In conclusion



The Community Conversations across the North Coast have produced a **rich set of resident-driven proposals that clearly reflect local needs.**



Themes around skills, wellbeing, poverty and empowering communities provide a strong foundation for the 2026/27 Locality Plan.

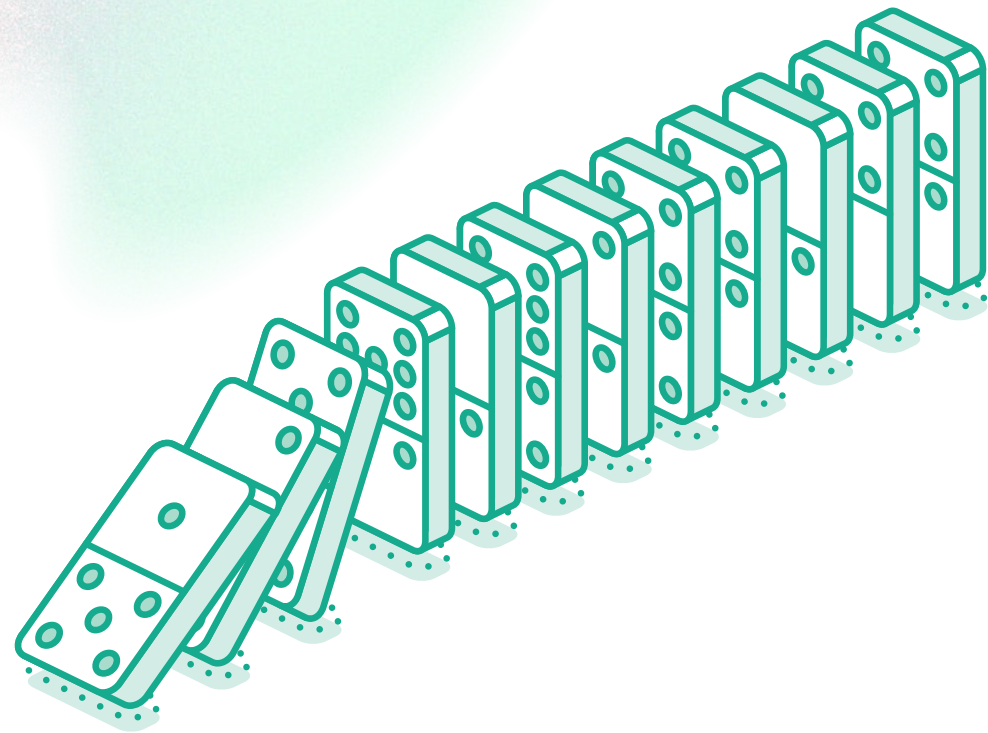


Barriers exist and there are challenges to overcome. People want to belong, to cope financially and feel mentally well and have the opportunities to learn and work, but barriers of awareness, confidence and stigma stand in their way.

By aligning the proposals with local partners, funding opportunities, and community capacity, the North Coast Locality Partnership with support from all services, CPP Partners and community and third sector organisations, are **well-positioned to develop meaningful, equitable, and locally led change.**



The domino effect

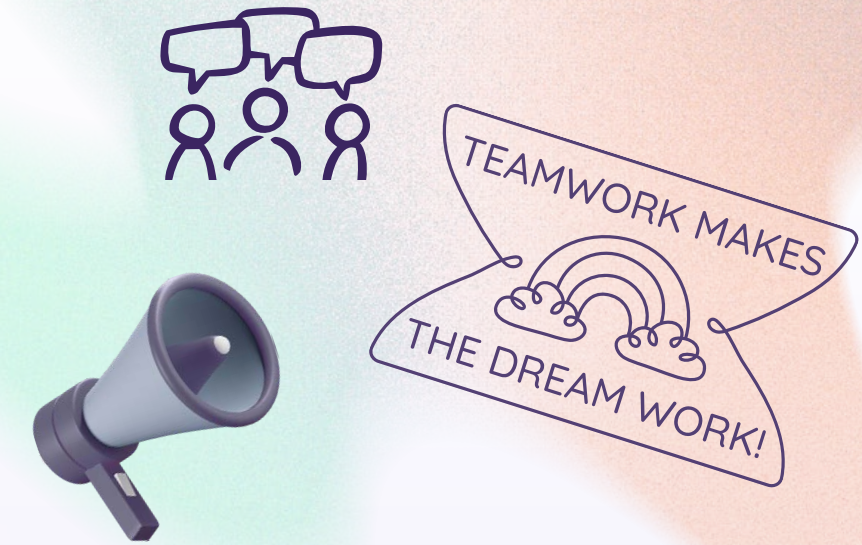
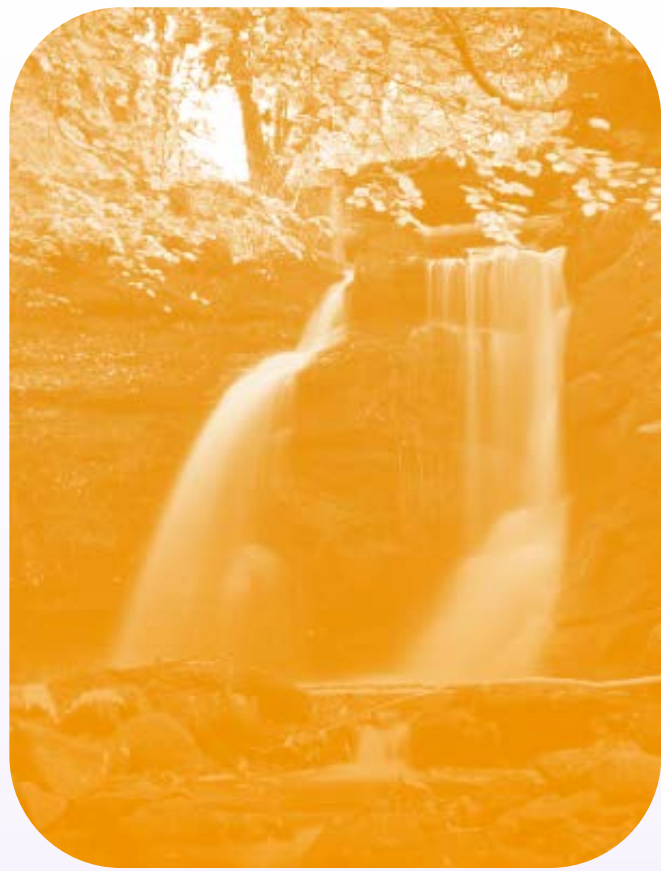


Creating the new North Coast Locality Plan will help us to addressing poverty, skills, wellbeing, financial access and social inclusion together, through local, dignified and community-led approaches.

Addressing even just one of the above priorities will have a positive knock-on effect on the next, so the impact we are set to make in the coming year will be profound if we can tackle them together.

If we do the above, there is a strong possibility to:

- Reduce pressure on families
- Improve wellbeing and resilience
- Increase access to work and learning
- Strengthen community connection
- Build a more inclusive and confident North Coast for all!



That's a wrap (for now)...

Findings are now being reported back to the North Coast Locality Network to agree a Locality Action Plan and identify both short, medium and long term plans for North Ayrshire Council and Community Planning partners. Stay tuned to the Shaping North Ayrshire website and social media for updates...