



Newsy

Celebrating Community Action, Inclusion and Belonging Across Renfrewshire

STORIES OF

BELONGING

COMMUNITY

COLLABORATION

HOPE



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Welcome



Welcome to the first edition of IN-Ren Newsy.

Over the past year, the Integration Network Renfrewshire (IN-Ren) has brought together community groups, organisations, volunteers and residents to strengthen connections, share knowledge and create opportunities for people from all backgrounds to participate and thrive.

This first edition celebrates the people, partnerships and projects that are helping to build a more welcoming, inclusive and connected Renfrewshire. Inside you'll find stories of creativity, collaboration, cultural celebration, volunteering and community action, alongside reflections from people and organisations making a difference across the network.

Many of the articles have been written by community members and organisations themselves. We have made light editorial edits for clarity, consistency, readability and publication style, while taking care to preserve each contributor's own voice, perspective and intended message.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this first edition. We hope these stories inspire new connections, spark new ideas and encourage even more people to get involved.

Belonging isn't created by one organisation.

It's created every time someone welcomes a neighbour, shares knowledge, volunteers, listens, collaborates or opens a door.

Every story in these pages reflects those everyday actions. Together, they show how communities across Renfrewshire are shaping a future where everyone can belong.

Community Voices

Every story in this newsletter represents a different experience of belonging, participation and community life in Renfrewshire.

From grassroots organisations and volunteers to young people, artists and community members, these pages showcase the many ways people are creating opportunities, supporting one another and strengthening their communities.

Together, these stories remind us that lasting change happens through collaboration, shared experiences and the willingness to listen, learn and work alongside one another.

In this edition



- Community Knowledge Festival – *A Celebration of Connection, Culture and Community*
- Ubuntu Women Shelter – *I Am a Hurricane, I Am Scotland*
- Sewing2gether All Nations & Open Aye – *We've Got Your Back*
- Kairos Women+ – *The Journey*
- Supporting People Seeking Asylum – *Learning Together*
- School of African Cultures – *KOLA Easter Holiday Camp*
- Bring Unity to Communities (BUC) & ReMode – *Creativity as a Tool for Change*
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Community Knowledge Festival

A Celebration of Connection, Culture and Community



The first IN-Ren Community Knowledge Festival, held in May 2026, brought together residents, community groups, volunteers and local organisations for a day of learning, creativity and connection.

Designed as a welcoming, family-friendly event, the festival created opportunities for people from different backgrounds to meet one another, discover local services, celebrate cultures, build relationships and strengthen a sense of belonging.

Throughout the day, visitors explored interactive information spaces, enjoyed live performances, took part in creative workshops, family activities with childcare, and connected through conversations with community organisations, volunteers and neighbours.

More than an event, the festival reflected what IN-Ren is all about: creating spaces where everyone feels welcomed, valued and able to participate.

Thank You

The festival would not have been possible without the incredible collaboration of our members, volunteers and partners.

Thank you to everyone who hosted activities, shared their expertise, volunteered their time and helped create such a welcoming atmosphere. Your energy, creativity and commitment made the day a true celebration of community.

Together, we showed what is possible when communities come together to share knowledge, celebrate diversity and build connections.



People & moments from the first IN-Ren Community Knowledge Festival

From conversations and creative activities to performances and new friendships, these photographs capture the spirit of a day built on welcome, participation and community.





With thanks to all collaborators

- Renfrewshire Carers Centre
- BUC (Bring Unity to Communities)
- CLS (Community Language Support)
- QNetwork
- Police Scotland
- WSREC (West of Scotland Regional Equality Council)
- Ubuntu Women Shelter
- Invest in Renfrewshire
- NHS / University of Glasgow/ Cancer Research
- Harmony Global
- StudioFV
- Mhor Collective
- OneRen
- Renfrewshire Council
- Pachedu
- Changeworks
- Kairos Women+
- Sewing2gether All Nations,
- INFADENS (Inspiring Families Development Network Scotland)
- Open Aye
- School of African Cultures
- Creative Renfrewshire
- RenCAN

Community Voices

Ubuntu Women Shelter



I am a Hurricane, I am Scotland

Ubuntu Women Shelter provides unconditional practical support to destitute women and people of other marginalised genders with insecure immigration status and no recourse to public funds in Glasgow and Paisley.

At this year's IN-Ren Community Knowledge Festival, Ubuntu Women Shelter performed *I Am a Hurricane, I Am Scotland* — a powerful, community-

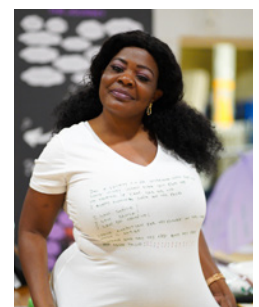
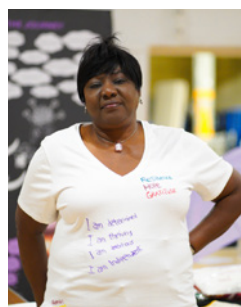
created performance exploring identity, resilience and belonging through poetry, movement and lived experience. Through creativity, storytelling and performance, the organisation creates spaces where women's experiences are heard, respected and transformed into collective action.

Below, Ubuntu Women Shelter share the story behind the performance in their own words.

The performance is part of our Stronger than the Hostile Environment platform, which has been running since 2020.

Our platform showcases dynamic, awareness-raising, culturally co-produced performances that centre the lived and living experiences of women (self-identifying and trans women) navigating the degrading and hostile immigration policies of successive governments. This heart-centred performance is informed by our Way of Council practice, which lies at the heart of everything we do.*

The piece we performed at the Community Knowledge Festival was titled I Am a Hurricane, I Am Scotland.



"I was uplifted and freed by the energy in the room."



This 30-minute performance, designed and delivered by our dedicated specialist volunteers, unfolded in two acts. The first portrayed the divisions between racist and anti-racist protesters. Performers carried placards and wore masks representing hatred, prejudice and division.

In the second act, the performers threw down their placards and ripped off their masks to reveal individually written poems graffitied across their bodies. They were no longer hiding their words or their realities.

The performance ended with the audience freestyling a jig around the hall, reinforcing our common humanity.

One performer reflected: "I was uplifted and freed by the energy in the room."

Another shared: "I was surprised at the love and acceptance I felt in the midst of all this hate."

Creativity continues to be a powerful way of bringing people together.

* Way of Council is a restorative circle practice in which people gather to speak and listen from the heart, without judgment.

"I was surprised at the love and acceptance I felt in the midst of all this hate."

Small Grants, Big Impact

Sometimes a small investment can make a big difference.

Through IN-Ren's Micro-Grants, local organisations have transformed ideas into activities that bring people

together, reduce isolation, build confidence and create opportunities for participation. The following stories show how creativity,

collaboration and community leadership are helping to strengthen connections across Renfrewshire.

We've Got Your Back



Sewing2gether All Nations & Open Aye

Sewing2gether All Nations is a grassroots charity based in Renfrewshire that provides sewing and creative upcycling workshops, language cafés, life skills training and practical support to refugees and people seeking asylum. Through creativity and community,

the organisation helps people practise English, build friendships and improve their health and wellbeing.

Open Aye was created to provide a platform for people whose voices are often unheard in public communications. Through

collaborative approaches to visual storytelling and social action research, the organisation co-creates images and messages that create positive social impact. Below, Sewing2gether All Nations and Open Aye share the story behind We've Got Your Back.

Community Story

What happens when you combine creativity, trust, and a welcoming community?

You create something truly special.

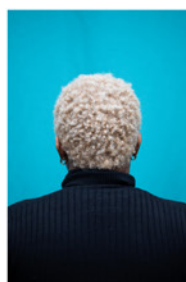
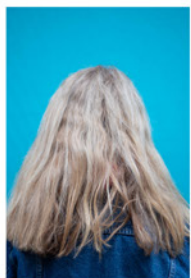
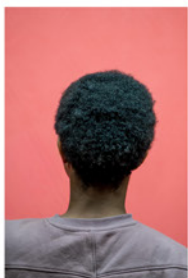
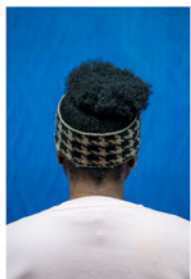
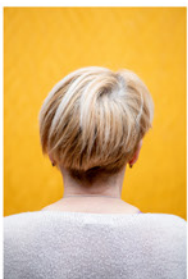
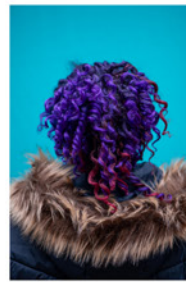
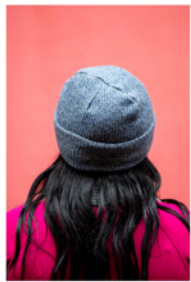
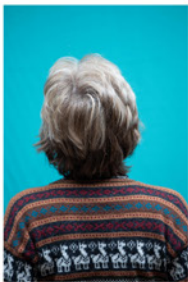
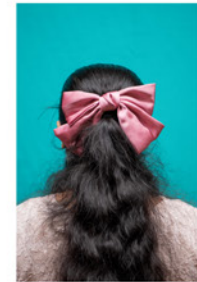
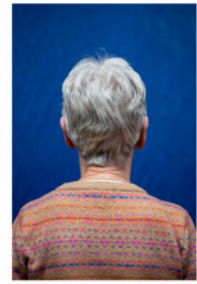
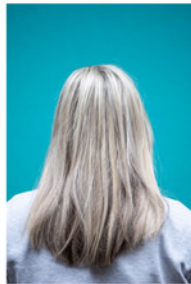
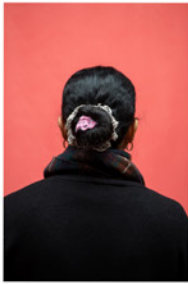
Thanks to an IN-Ren Micro-Grant, Sewing2gether All Nations partnered with photographer Becky Duncan from Open Aye to deliver *We've Got Your Back*—a creative photography project

celebrating identity, resilience and belonging.

Held in February to mark World Day of Social Justice, the workshop brought together 42 women from more than a dozen countries at Sewing2gether All Nations' base in Paisley. During the session, participants learned the basics of using digital cameras, experimented with colour and texture using fresh

flowers and upcycled fabrics, and each selected a favourite photograph to receive as a framed print.

The project's centrepiece was a collective portrait unlike any other. Becky photographed each participant from behind, using beautiful fabrics as backdrops. The portraits symbolised resilience, identity and the journey ahead.



We've Got Your Back Community Story

These individual portraits were brought together into a striking artwork titled *We've Got Your Back*, celebrating the beauty, humanity and resilience of Renfrewshire's New Scots communities. Every participant received the finished artwork as an A5 fridge magnet, creating a lasting reminder that they are part of a community that stands beside them.

The project demonstrated the power of creative, trauma-informed approaches to inclusion. As participants developed basic photography skills and explored creativity together, they built confidence, formed new friendships across cultures and languages, and found new ways to express themselves in a supportive environment.

One participant shared:

"Thank you for your kindness,

support, and compassion towards refugees and survivors of war. Your care means so much to people who have experienced loss, hardship, and uncertainty. You do more than provide help, you create a welcoming space where people feel safe, valued, and respected. What touches me most is that you see us as human beings who deserve dignity, respect, and the opportunity for a better life. Your kindness reminds us that there are people who care and who believe in our future."

The confidence gained through *We've Got Your Back* has given inspiration to the group's next creative project, *Faces of Belonging*. Many of the women who first felt comfortable taking part in the symbolic back-portrait project have since gone on to create self-portraits celebrating

their individuality—a powerful reflection of growing confidence, trust and belonging.

This project is a wonderful example of how a small grant can create a lasting impact, helping people from diverse backgrounds connect, express themselves and build stronger, more inclusive communities.

"Thank you for your kindness, support, and compassion towards refugees and survivors of war."



The Journey

Kairos Women+



Welcome home.

Kairos Women+ is a vibrant, welcoming space designed for women+ (including trans women and non-binary people) to come together to learn, grow and connect.

From creative projects and community celebrations to opportunities for connection and self-expression, Kairos supports women+ to build confidence, share experiences and shape the activities that matter most to them.

Here, the Kairos team reflect on some of the highlights from the past year in their own words.



At Kairos Women+, we believe that everyone deserves to feel safe, connected and valued. We create welcoming spaces where women+ can build friendships, develop confidence and shape activities based on their own experiences, strengths and aspirations.

This year has been filled with opportunities for creativity, celebration and community participation.

We were proud to participate in the Paisley Arts Festival through our Women+ Make Noise choir. Working alongside musician Farzané Zamen, participants wrote and performed an original song inspired by the hopes, experiences and values of the Kairos community.

*As the song reminds us:
“If you feel sad, nervous
or lonely, always have*

hope. Remember love and compassion bring warmth and hope.”

We also celebrated International Women’s Day with a community event that brought women together to connect, recognise one another’s achievements and strengthen relationships across our community.

At the Community Knowledge Festival, we facilitated Threads of Renfrewshire, a collaborative textile workshop exploring safety, belonging, growth and support. Together, participants created placemats and a community tablecloth while sharing stories of hope, empathy and encouragement.

Through each of these activities, we continue to build communities rooted in welcome, respect and solidarity, helping create a Scotland where everyone feels valued, included and empowered.”

*“If you feel sad, nervous
or lonely, always have
hope. Remember love
and compassion bring
warmth and hope.”*



Learning Together

A group of volunteers from local churches has been supporting people seeking asylum in Renfrewshire by offering practical help, friendship and a warm welcome as they begin new chapters in their lives.

The following reflection was written by Jean on behalf of the volunteer team, sharing what they have learned through walking alongside the young men they meet each week.

"I am part of a team of volunteers from different local churches who support young men seeking asylum and living in local temporary accommodation, hoping to be given the opportunity to stay in Scotland, where they can work, study and become part of our communities.

Every Friday afternoon, they come to a church hall where we offer support in many different ways. We provide clothing, trainers, toiletries, a listening ear and encouragement as they develop their English. There are also board and floor games, as well as activities like badminton and indoor curling, which bring plenty of laughter, friendly competition and fun.

Over time, we get to know the young men very well, and many tell us that coming on a Friday gives them a sense of "home." As we accompany

them on their journeys, they share something of the experiences that brought them here. Hearing about the long and often difficult journeys they have made, sometimes arriving with little more than the clothes they are wearing, has been a real learning experience for us.

I have a son, and I can't help thinking that if he were ever in the same situation, it would be a great comfort to know that someone was showing him kindness.

When someone is granted permission to stay and moves into their own home, our support continues. Thanks to generous donations from the local community, we can provide bedding, kitchen equipment, cutlery, crockery, pots and many other household essentials. We can also arrange for small pieces of furniture to be delivered when needed.

Friday afternoons always include tea, coffee, cake, fruit and ice cream, which is a particular favourite. At the end of Ramadan, we celebrate together with a special party.

One memory will always stay with me. During one of our celebrations, we introduced everyone to the traditional game Pass the Parcel. Most of the young men joined in straight away, but one sat quietly to the side, looking rather sceptical. As soon as the laughter started, he couldn't resist. He was soon on his feet, joining in with everyone else. We then played Musical Chairs, with exactly the same sense of fun and friendly competition. We enjoyed it just as much as they did.

We learn so much from the young men, and it is especially heartwarming to watch their confidence grow, both in their language and in themselves, as they begin to settle and look towards the future.

It is truly a two-way street of giving and receiving. While we hope we make a positive difference in the lives of people seeking asylum, they enrich our lives just as much. It is a privilege to walk alongside them and witness the resilience, courage and hope they bring to our community."

Youth Voices

School of African Cultures - KOLA Easter Holiday Camp

By Christabelle Alabi (13)



The School of African Cultures (SOAC) is a youth club and school of cultures that brings children and young people together to celebrate African richness, learn new skills and build confidence through creative, cultural and educational activities.

Here, Christabelle shares her experience of this year's KOLA Easter Holiday Camp in her own words.

My Experience

Are you looking for a place where children can play, learn and have fun?

You've found the right place!

KOLA's Easter Holiday Camp 2026 was a place full of fun, relaxation and new experiences. It was the perfect mix of adventure, learning and making new friends.

The Games

The games were really fun, creative and enjoyable, and everyone loved taking part. We played games such as Chinese Whispers, Duck Duck Goose, Musical Chairs, Musical Statues and parachute games. There were also outdoor activities, including football and different races, such as sack races.

These activities helped everyone stay active, work together as a team and make new friends.



Overall, the Easter Holiday Camp was an amazing experience. It gave us the chance to learn new skills, make new friends and build our confidence while having lots of fun.



The Competitions

Competitions were another exciting part of the holiday camp. We had dancing and drawing competitions, and everyone did their very best. There were prizes for the winners, but everyone encouraged one another and celebrated each other's achievements. Seeing other teams doing well motivated everyone to try even harder.

Learning New Skills

Another important part of the camp was the skill development talks. Our facilitator spoke about teamwork, leadership and confidence, helping us to learn useful life skills and encouraging us to believe in ourselves.

One moment that really stood out to me was seeing a young autistic participant create a new piece of artwork every day and proudly display it for everyone to admire. It reminded us that everyone has different talents and that everyone deserves the chance to shine.

Looking Back

Overall, the Easter Holiday Camp was an amazing experience. It gave us the chance to learn new skills, make new friends and build our confidence while having lots of fun.

Many of us are already looking forward to the next holiday camp!

A big thank you to all the organisers, volunteers and young leaders who made the experience so memorable for everyone.



Creativity as a Tool for Change

Bring Unity to Communities (BUC) & ReMode



Bring Unity to Communities (BUC) supports young people aged 15–25, including young refugees and people seeking asylum, to build confidence, develop leadership skills and create positive change within their communities.

ReMode empowers young people and communities across Renfrewshire to make informed, sustainable choices in fashion through education, creative upcycling and practical mending workshops.

Here, BUC share the story of their partnership with ReMode and how an IN-Ren Micro-Grant helped bring their ideas to life—in their own words.

Together with ReMode, we successfully applied for an IN-Ren Micro-Grant to share positive anti-racism messages across Renfrewshire.

ReMode spent time discussing ideas with our young people, listening to what they wanted the project to be. Together, we decided to use the funding to learn a new skill—screen printing. Our young people designed and printed positive anti-racism messages onto

T-shirts and tote bags, using creativity to share messages of inclusion and belonging.

We didn't want to keep our new skills to ourselves. We used the funding to plan and deliver T-shirt printing and arts and crafts workshops, inviting young people and families from ethnically diverse communities to come along, get creative and have a go themselves.

“We hope to raise more awareness about positive anti-racism in Renfrewshire.”

Creativity as a Tool for Change

ReMode supported us throughout the project, listening carefully to our young people's ideas and recognising the importance of their lived experiences. They also gifted us a screen print of our logo, allowing us to continue using our new skills in future activities.

As a newly established organisation, we have benefited enormously from the opportunities and connections created through the Integration Network. We are grateful to IN-Ren for the

funding that enabled us to learn a new skill and deliver an event that had real meaning for our communities while bringing people together. There was a fantastic turnout on the day, with young people and families taking part in the activities. Local community police officers also came along to show their support, joining in with the screen printing and spending time chatting with participants.

One parent commented: "This type of event is really important for our family."

One of our members summed up the project's ambition perfectly: "We hope to raise more awareness about positive anti-racism in Renfrewshire — watch this space!"

The project showed us how creativity can bring people together, give young people a voice and inspire positive change within our communities.

ReMode supported us throughout the project, listening carefully to our young people's ideas



Creative Voices

I'm Intolerant of Tolerance



By Gregor Smart, IN-Ren Volunteer,
Q Network Co-Founder and Community Member

Among the many people who contribute to IN-Ren are individuals whose creativity inspires reflection and encourages conversation.

IN-Ren volunteer Gregor Smart has a gift for transforming ideas, lived experiences and social issues into powerful spoken word. His writing invites us to pause, reflect and see the world through a different lens.

Below, Gregor shares one of his original poems.

I'm Intolerant of Tolerance (My IN-tole-RANT)

I'm intolerant of tolerance
so, I won't be tolerated.
But not in the way you think.
It might not be the dictionary
definition
but for me, it's not a good or a
positive thing.
For me, to be tolerated carries
a grudging, negative weight.
And it's not too far to travel
from being put up with
to fear, distrust and hate
No, I won't be tolerated
and this is my IN-tole-RANT!

I'm an asylum seeker, a
refugee.
I'm anyone who for any reason
chose to
or was forced to migrate.
I'm a person of a different
colour, a different race, a
different faith - or none.

I'm neurodivergent, I'm
differently abled.
I'm gay, I'm trans, I'm non-
binary,
I'm the whole rainbow
spectrum.
And most importantly
I'm still and always will be
part of the great big
human family!

If you've always felt welcomed,
accepted, respected, loved
then as your sister, your
brother, albeit from another
mother
I ask, I demand, I have
the right
to be welcomed, accepted,
respected, loved just the same.
So, I won't be tolerated,
assimilated, judgmentally
precepted, grudgingly
accepted.

I shouldn't have to fear, to beg,
to protest, to fight
just to be treated the same
as you!
That should surely be plain &
simple -
a fact of life, a truth.
Yes, I'm intolerant of tolerance
of being put up with and told
to put up with
things that shouldn't, that just
can't be borne.
Would you accept that? Would
that be enough for you?
It's time to make a difference,
To walk a little distance in
my shoes.

Time to Welcome, Respect,
Accept. Love. Me.
All of me & all the 'mes'
because if the shoe was on the
other foot
I'd do the same for you...

Behind the Stories

Building a More Connected Renfrewshire

Every story in this edition of IN-Ren Newsy reflects something bigger.

Behind every new partnership, community event, training session, volunteer, creative project and conversation is a growing network of organisations working together to help create a Renfrewshire where everyone feels welcomed, valued and has a sense of belonging.

Over the past year, IN-Ren has continued to grow as a trusted network where organisations connect, share knowledge,

build partnerships and work collaboratively to improve opportunities, services and outcomes for ethnically and culturally diverse communities across Renfrewshire.

Our Vision

A Renfrewshire where everyone has equitable access to opportunities, services and community life, and where people from all backgrounds help shape stronger, more connected communities together.

Who We Are

Integration Network Renfrewshire (IN-Ren) is a network of third sector organisations working alongside communities to strengthen inclusion, reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for ethnically and culturally diverse communities across Renfrewshire.

Our members include charities, social enterprises, community groups and volunteer-led organisations that support refugees, people seeking asylum, migrants and long-established ethnically and culturally diverse communities.



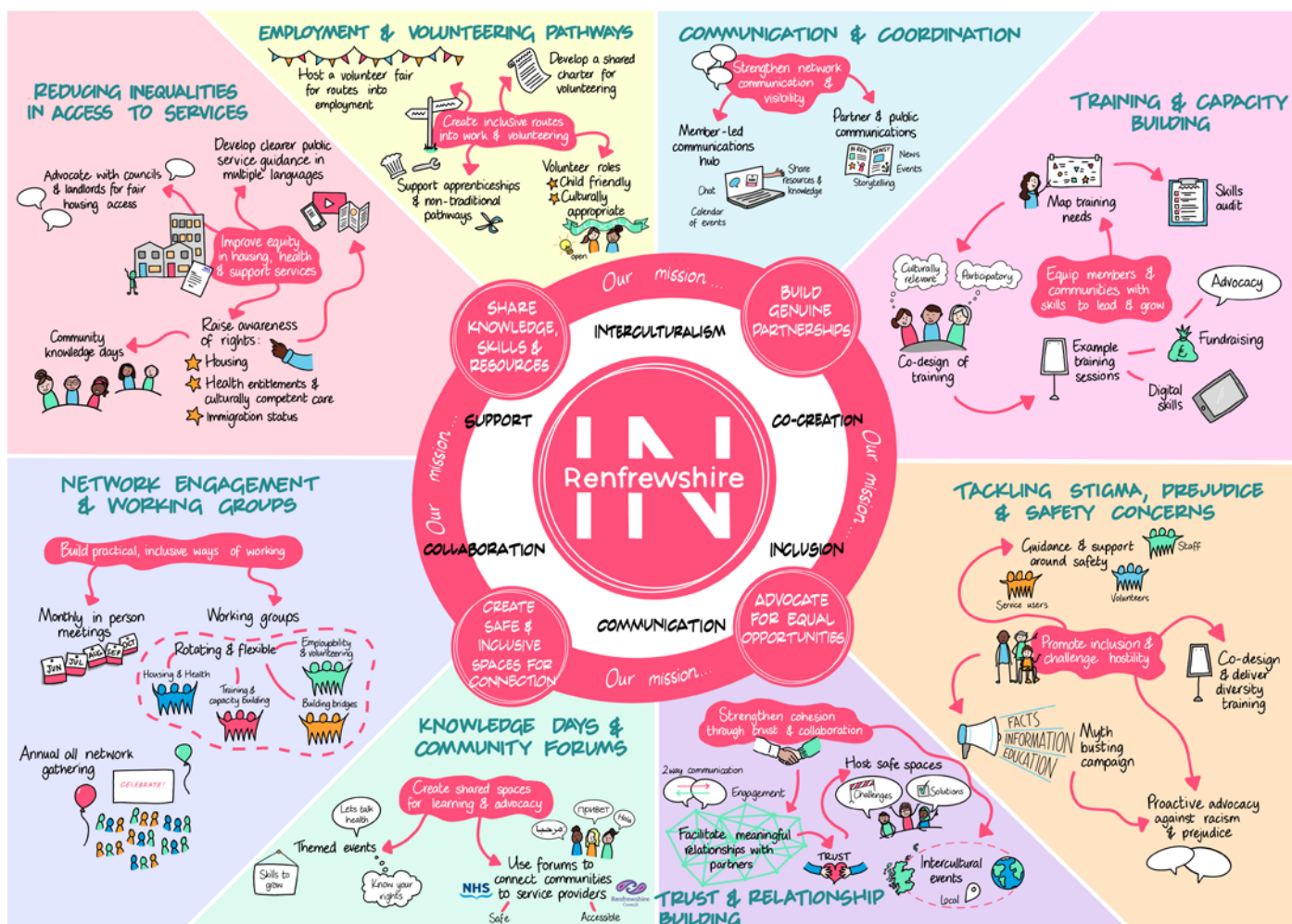
By working together, we:

- Build meaningful partnerships across the third sector.
- Share knowledge, skills and good practice.
- Strengthen community voices and lived experience.
- Support collaboration, learning and capacity building.
- Promote more inclusive services and communities.
- Create opportunities for organisations to work together for greater impact.

Our Values

- Interculturalism
- Co-creation
- Communication
- Inclusion
- Collaboration
- Support

Our Strategic Action Plan



The stories throughout this edition demonstrate our Strategic Action Plan in action—showing how collaboration, learning and community leadership are helping create lasting change across Renfrewshire.

Collaborate with us

If your organisation would like to collaborate with IN-Ren, share learning, develop partnerships or work together to improve inclusion across

Renfrewshire, we'd love to hear from you.

We welcome collaboration with community organisations, funders, local

partnerships, public services and other organisations that share our commitment to building stronger, more connected communities.



Integration Network Renfrewshire (IN-Ren)

• info@engagerenfrewshire.com • engagerenfrewshire.org



Looking Back, Moving Forward

This first edition of IN-Ren Newsy captures just a glimpse of what has been happening across Renfrewshire over the past year.

Together, these stories show what is possible when communities come together to listen, learn and work alongside one another. They celebrate volunteers giving their time, organisations building partnerships,

neighbours becoming friends, and people from different backgrounds creating spaces where everyone can participate and belong.

Every conversation, every project and every act of kindness contributes to building a more welcoming, inclusive and connected Renfrewshire.

Thank You

A heartfelt thank you to every community member, volunteer, organisation and partner who shared their stories, photographs, creativity and experiences for this first edition.

This newsletter belongs to everyone who has contributed to making Renfrewshire a place where people feel welcomed, valued and connected.

Together, we are shaping the narrative—one conversation, one partnership and one act of belonging at a time.

We Are All Renfrewshire

Belonging doesn't happen by chance. It is created through the choices we make every day.

The We Are All Renfrewshire Pledge is a shared commitment to creating communities where everyone feels safe, respected, valued and able to belong.

By taking the pledge, you are committing to:

- Stand against hate and discrimination
- Welcome people from all backgrounds
- Promote understanding, kindness and respect
- Help build stronger, more connected communities

Together, we can build a Renfrewshire where everyone belongs. Take the pledge and find out more by scanning the QR code.

