



Safer and Empowered Communities Forum
Wednesday 3 September 2025
10am – 12pm
Via MS Teams

Present:

Eloise Wilson (Chairperson)	CVS Falkirk & District
Laura Jamieson (Minute Taker)	CVS Falkirk & District
Claire Hughes	Transform Forth Valley
Jacinta Jaylo Barker	RISE Forth Valley
Kelly Tulloch	Healthcare Improvement Scotland
Lorraine Mackenzie	Freedom of Mind Community Choir
Lou Carberry	LGBT Youth Scotland
Lynda Ross-Hale	Cyrenians
Maria Thorpe	1 st Step Development Ventures SCIO
Nicola Bruce	Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)
Sharlene Ramage	Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre
Viktorija Druniene	Fairer Falkirk at Falkirk Council

Guest Speakers:

Jennifer Goldie	Falkirk Council
Tatjana Sandon	Fairer Falkirk at Falkirk Council

Apologies:

Caroline Nisbet	Forth Valley Sensory Centre
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1. Welcome and Introductions

Eloise introduced herself, welcomed forum members present, and introduced the guest speakers from Falkirk Council: Tatjana Sandon from the Fairer Falkirk team, and Jennifer Goldie, Senior Housing Needs Prevention Officer.

2. Review of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held in May 2025 will be sent to members for approval by email.

3. “Community Transport Project”: Tatjana Sandon, Fairer Falkirk at Falkirk Council

Tatjana gave a brief overview of Fairer Falkirk and the team’s work, along with a presentation on the new Community Transport project, which is available to view or download from the [CVS Falkirk & District](#) website (linked for your convenience). Key points are noted below:

- The Community Transport project is an offer to Falkirk District’s communities and third sector to use Falkirk Council’s minibuses; Falkirk Council wants to make best use of its assets, including the minibus fleet.
 - Currently, there are 2 minibuses available, but they are aiming to expand the fleet.



- Falkirk Council has the funds for expansion, so are keen for the project to be used and for groups to feedback on their experiences, so Fairer Falkirk can evidence the need for expansion.
- The idea came from the School Holiday Fund (as many of the costs included in applications from the sector were for travel costs), as well as the knowledge that public transport does always meet the needs of local communities, especially in rural areas.
- The project is open to anyone within the Falkirk District area, and is not a replacement for public transport, but designed to complement it.
- Hires can be for one-off uses, or regular hire; in the latter case, additional information will be needed on the hire reasons and use.
- Falkirk Council is aiming to make this project as cost effective for users as possible, by paying all fees, and there are no hire costs; groups will only have to pay for petrol (as Falkirk Council ask that the tank is filled before the minibus is returned after use), and providing drivers (which need their MIDAS certification).
 - Groups can also hire drivers from Dial-a-Journey (where the cost is based on the length of the journey, and the time the driver is required).
 - MIDAS training via the Employment and Training Unit (ETU) costs around £100 (though this does not include the D1).
- The minibus cannot be used overnight, and must be returned to Falkirk Council at the end of each day. However, the buses can be taken anywhere within Scotland (within a day's journey, as above), and Falkirk Council does not need a full itinerary of each journey, just an approximate location.

Members had the following questions:

- Would they consider a recurring booking, and weekends?
 - Depending on the fleet expansion and how long the booking would be for, recurring bookings would definitely be considered. Weekends and evenings are also doable.
- Can groups book both minibuses at the same time?
 - Yes, if they are available.
- Are the minibuses wheelchair and pram accessible?
 - Definitely accessible for prams, and if the existing buses are not wheelchair accessible, any new buses bought will be.

4. **“Housing Needs and Homelessness Prevention”**: Jennifer Goldie (Senior Housing Needs Prevention Officer), Falkirk Council

Jennifer provided background information on her role and its purpose, along with her own presentation, which is also available to view or download via the [CVS Falkirk & District](#) website. Key points included:

- A housing allocations update in April means that those presenting as homeless, or requesting housing through Falkirk Council, can only request a maximum of 3 desired areas within Falkirk District; the current system divides Falkirk District into 10 areas.
- By March 2025, Jennifer's team had dealt with 11,000 homeless applications; by July 2025, they had dealt with over 12,000.
- There are currently around 1,100 homeless applications across Falkirk District.



- It takes approximately 2 years for someone presenting as homeless to be processed through the whole service, costing around £25,000 each time; this is part of why there is now such a focus on prevention, which Jennifer described as “using what we have in time to make a difference”.
- Jennifer noted that people can be placed in unsuitable accommodation such as B&Bs, which can be in or out the area, as this might be all that is available due to the current housing emergency. However, they try hard not to do this.
- Scottish Government research that, within the Homeless Prevention Framework, Scotland excels at responding in Recovery Provision, Emergency Provision, and Crisis Provision, but needs to work to improve in other areas, especially Targeted Provision.
 - Jennifer highlighted that Falkirk District is the only area in Scotland where homeless numbers have dropped, and is one of the few seeing improvements; she is hopeful that this is due to their work with services, and getting ahead of the Ask and Act requirements before it comes into effect.
- Ask and Act: Ask and Act is part of the [Housing \(Scotland\) Bill](#), which will legally require public bodies to ask people at risk of homelessness their housing status, and then act accordingly.
 - Jennifer’s team is working to get ahead of this and continue using the services they already work closely with.
 - They can also hold appointments over the phone, by email, and in person at the offices of groups and services, or at the Falkirk Council Advice Hubs.

5. Update from the Community Justice Partnership: Nicola Bruce (Community Justice Co-ordinator), Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)

As the Community Justice Co-ordinator for Falkirk District, and co-chair of the Community Justice Partnership (with Lynda Ross-Hale), Nicola is currently in the midst of preparing the annual report for Community Justice Scotland (CJS). CJS then reports to Scottish Government on what is going well in community justice, and challenges faced across Scotland over the last year.

She also highlighted an opportunity to look at the Falkirk Community Justice Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP), and asked if members were aware of the page on the Falkirk Council website where their group could request community payback support (ie. those on community payback orders completing tasks for the group).

The majority of members were unaware of this page and availability, and Nicola asked if this was something they would consider or find value from? She also invited members to ask her any questions they had, and raise any concerns or barriers they anticipated.

Members discussed their experiences with community payback workers, as well as asking questions. Some noted the need for reassurances around safety (especially for vulnerable groups). Nicola highlighted how valuable this feedback was, and that the focus of community payback orders is on value for the community (as such, they cannot support private companies or individuals, as there is a strict criteria). Clients are also risk assessed, to ensure that the work is suitable for them and the community, including vulnerable groups.



Nicola and Lynda mentioned the possibility of speaking at a later forum meeting, which Eloise will take forward.

ACTION: Eloise to discuss possibility of presenting on community justice and community payback support with Nicola and Lynda.

6. Member Updates

- Freedom of Mind Community Choir: Freedom of Mind has funding to put on performances in Falkirk North before the end of the calendar year; they have space for 3 or 4 performances still.
- RISE Forth Valley: RISE Forth Valley will be holding its Black History Month activities in October, including an exhibition with Forth Valley Climate Hub (featuring an exhibition on loan from Dynamic Earth, and from Creative Stirling), along with a [Cultural Sharing Event](#) on Saturday 25 October 2025 at Bailliefields Community Hub.
- World Homeless Day: Jennifer shared that there will be a World Homeless Day event taking place in Dollar Park on Friday 10 October 2025; the poster is expected to be available at the end of the week, and she will share with Eloise.
- LGBT Youth Scotland: [Stirling Pride](#) takes place on Saturday 20 September 2025, and while it takes place in Stirling, is open to everyone from across Forth Valley. Along with the March, there will be stalls at the Albert Hall, and activities with LGBT Youth Scotland and Creative Stirling.
- Cyrenians: Lynda informed member that Cyrenians' Arnotdale House in Dollar Park offers [a range of rooms for hire](#), for team meetings, training sessions, community events, and group activities, amongst others.
- CVS Falkirk & District:
 - [Falkirk Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing](#): The Falkirk Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Round 5 is open for applications until 12pm on Thursday 2 October 2025. The Fund aims to support community-based projects and initiatives to help address local mental health and wellbeing needs for adults across Falkirk communities, with 3 grant types: Small: up to £2,000 for unconstituted groups, otherwise up to £5,000; Medium: up to £10,000; Large: up to £25,000. Applications MUST be made through our [Grant Funding Portal](#) (linked for your convenience).
 - [16 Days of Action](#): The Forth Valley 16 Days of Action Eventbrite page is now live, featuring events taking place in the build-up to this year's campaign, and during the campaign itself (running 25 November – 10 December every year). Eloise noted that Falkirk is taking the lead planning this year's partnership events, but that groups from across Forth Valley will be represented.

ACTION: Jacinta to contact Lorraine about a possible performance.

**Date of Next Meetings: Wednesday 3 December 2025,
10am – 12pm, via MS Teams**

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