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# **Supporting Good Decisions**

**Promoting Equality and Human Rights;  
Reducing Poverty; and  
Protecting the Environment**

## **Integrated Impact Assessment Form**

## Promoting Equality and Human Rights; Reducing Poverty; and Protecting the Environment

<b>Title of Policy/ Proposal</b>	Scottish Welfare Fund – Move to highest & most compelling priority rating
<b>Timescale for Implementation</b>	Applications from 1 September 2023
<b>IIA Completion Date</b>	25 August 2023
<b>Completed by</b>	Linda Ritchie (Team Manager – Financial Support), Linda Alexander (Equalities Officer)
<b>Lead officer</b>	Linda Ritchie (Team Manager – Financial Support)

### Section 1: Screening

#### 1.1 Briefly describe the policy/proposal/activity you are assessing.

Set out a clear understanding of the purpose of the policy/ proposal/ activity being developed or reviewed (e.g. objectives, aims) including the context within which it will operate.

Due to increased demand for the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) we are in position of limited funds for the remainder of this financial year. This financial year, we had used 72% of the council’s available budget by the end of July, giving rise to serious concerns about funding for the remainder of the 23/24 financial year. We have been unable to secure additional funding in this financial year to supplement the SWF core budget.

As a consequence we intend to move to a ‘high most compelling’ priority rating with effect from 1st September 2023.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE SCOTTISH WELFARE FUND**

A local authority may only use its SWF to provide occasional assistance (financial or otherwise) to individuals, specifically by way of a Crisis Grant<sup>1</sup> or a Community Care Grant<sup>2</sup>. **Crisis Grants** are provided where an individual is facing a disaster or emergency situation, and where there is an immediate threat to the health or safety of that individual or their family.

**Community Care Grants** are provided where a qualifying individual needs help to establish or maintain a settled home. A Community Care Grant may also be provided to support individuals and families facing exceptional pressure

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<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Welfare Funds (Scotland) Regulation 2016 reg.6(2)

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Welfare Funds (Scotland) Regulation 2016 reg.6(3)

In order to achieve consistency of service provision across Scotland, local authorities should apply a financial management approach to managing Community Care Grant and Crisis Grant budgets that shares similar principles.

It is expected that local authorities should manage expenditure in such a way as to ensure effective budgetary management of funds over the financial year.

Local authorities should establish and monitor at least two budget headings for 'Community Care Grant Provision' and 'Crisis Grant Provision'. Further derivatives of these may also be of benefit to individual local authorities.

Local authorities are free to vire between Community Care Grants and Crisis Grant budget headings without restriction. It is, however, an aim of the national scheme over time to seek a real terms reduction in expenditure on Crisis Grants as a result of successful intervention preventing crisis reoccurring, thereby increasing funds available for preventative spend on Community Care Grants.

Although the application of virement can be helpful for monitoring purposes, local authorities should take decisions to apply priorities and cap spend at SWF level within the authority, i.e. Community Care Grants & Crisis Grants collectively. This means expenditure on Crisis Grants cannot be suspended whilst resources remain within the Community Care Grant budget heading and vice versa.

It is envisaged that budget holders will assess the demand pattern of actual activity against budget profile throughout the financial year, making operational decisions about whether it is possible to make awards for high priority applications only, high and medium or high, medium and low.

The priority can be set at different levels for Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants. We would not expect local authorities to reject any application which has been judged to match the priority level applying at the time the application is considered (i.e. at the time of decision) if funds remain in either the Community Care Grant or the Crisis Grant budget headings.

## **1.2 What will change as a result of this policy?**

During the course of this financial year, we have assessed the demand pattern of actual activity against budget profile and have made operational decisions about awards, with a priority level of 'high' being maintained for both Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants. As we need to manage expenditure to ensure that high priority Crisis Grant payments can continue to be made, it is now clear that action needs to be taken to manage the very high risk that we will be unable to maintain this commitment.

Based on the consistently high demands levels we have experienced last year and this year, if no counteractive action is taken, we would almost certainly be heading towards our budget being fully spent by October 2023.

It is therefore considered necessary to move to a 'high most compelling' priority rating for Community Care Grants with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023.

Under the 'high most compelling' priority rating, the Council will apply the following criteria when assessing claims:

- the applicant’s need would be judged to be immediate and extremely severe
- the applicant is judged to be highly vulnerable and at immediate risk
- an award for the item or money requested would have a substantial, immediate and sustained effect in resolving or improving the health and wellbeing of the applicant or their family
- there will be significant and immediate adverse consequences if the item or money is not provided

### 1.3 Deciding if a full Impact Assessment is needed.

Please answer the following questions:

	Yes	No
1. The policy/ proposal has consequences for or affects people e.g. how they can access a service?	x	
2. The policy/proposal has potential to make a significant impact on equality and human rights, socio-economic disadvantage, the council’s role as a corporate parent, or the council’s commitment to tackling climate change?	x	
3. The policy/proposal is likely to have a significant environmental impact as defined by the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005?		x
4. The policy/ proposal involves a data processing activity (storage / collection of personal data) that is likely to result in a high risk to individuals as determined by Article 35 of the General Data Protection Regulation?		x

- If you have answered yes to questions 1 and 2 above, please proceed to complete the Integrated Impact Assessment. If you have answered No then an IIA does not need to be completed. Please keep a copy of the screening paperwork.
- If you have answered yes to question 3, you will need to consider whether you need to complete a Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- If you have answered yes to question 4, you will need to consider whether you need to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment. Please seek further advice from the Team Manager Information Governance.



## Section 2: Integrated Impact Assessment

### 2.1 Have those who are directly affected by the policy had the opportunity to comment on new proposals?

Scottish Government and Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) have been advised of the council's intentions and the financial situation has been highlighted to 3<sup>rd</sup> sector. Elected members are also asked to formally note the decision at the Council meeting on 29 August. Potential service users not yet known to the council cannot be made aware in advance.

Due to the difficulty of this decision and its impact on vulnerable people, we have not communicated with or to, those most impacted. We need to consider any mitigating actions and available support and/or signposting to partner organisations before doing so.

### 2.2 What information/data have you used to inform the development of the policy to date?

This work is delivered as part of our duties set out in the Welfare Fund (Scotland) Act 2015. The accompanying statutory guidance has informed implementation in relation to budgetary decision making. The following have informed this work:

- [Scottish Government Social Security statistics publications - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)
- [Characteristics of Households in Receipt of Awards - Scottish Welfare Fund Statistics: annual update 2022-2023 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)
- [Scottish Welfare Fund: action plan - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)
- [Welfare Funds \(Scotland\) Act 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)
- [Review of the Scottish Welfare Fund: Main Report \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

### 2.3 What does the evidence/ research suggest about the policy's actual or likely impact on equality groups and those vulnerable/ or experiencing socio-economic disadvantage?

Evidence	Comment
Which groups are in particular need of this service?	The Community Care Grants provides qualifying individuals and families with support to establish and maintain a settled home. It is provided to people and families who face exceptional pressure. They can receive support if they are:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leaving care or might need to go into a care institution</li> <li>• if they are leaving imprisonment or caring for someone on temporary release from prison or a young offenders' institution</li> <li>• if they have been homeless or living an unsettled way of life</li> <li>• if they, or someone in their household, are facing exceptional pressure</li> </ul> <p>Reducing the funds available will have an adverse impact on already vulnerable people.</p>
<p>What level of service uptake/ access is there from protected and vulnerable groups?</p>	<p>All uptake is from protected and vulnerable groups as set out within the funds criteria. Postcode monitoring indicates SIMD (Scottish index of multiple deprivation) areas.</p> <p>Community Care Grants awards 2023/24</p> <p>April – 117</p> <p>May – 114</p> <p>June - 117</p>
<p>Can you identify positive outcomes for service users</p>	<p>Supports people to ensure they can maintain a settled and stable home.</p> <p>Identifying and awarding to the groups who meet all the criteria listed will ensure we assist the most vulnerable residents in East Lothian while meeting our budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the applicant's need would be judged to be immediate and extremely severe</li> <li>• the applicant is judged to be highly vulnerable and at immediate risk</li> <li>• an award for the item or money requested would have a substantial, immediate and sustained effect in resolving or improving the health and wellbeing of the applicant or their family</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there will be significant and immediate adverse consequences if the item or money is not provided</li> </ul> <p>This supports people to better achieve/perform in employment, education and uptake of services for example</p>
What is the service user experience of those from protected or vulnerable groups?	Uptake of the fund, enables and supports vulnerable and protected people to establish and maintain a settled home.
What opportunity have those from protected groups had to co-produce or comment on the service/ plans?	<p>The development of the Scottish Government action plan engaged with service users in relation to the legislation, this also involved Third Sector Organisations such as the Trussell Trust, and local authorities. It provided an opportunity to comment on the policy as it was developed.</p> <p>In relation to the decision to move to a 'high most compelling' priority rating, those from groups most impacted have not been involved in this difficult decision.</p>

#### 2.4 How does the policy meet the different needs of groups in the community?

This service provides Community care grants to establish and maintain settled homes. It is awarded on an agreed criteria for all applicants.

The application process is open to anyone over 16 years of age, each receiving a grant or support according to their needs. Where further support is required other services are involved to provide support and information. [Scottish Welfare Fund - help with living costs - mygov.scot](https://www.mygov.scot)

Scottish Government data collection, at the point of application is set out by local authority area with local data collected by postcode, which indicates SIMD uptake.

The recent Scottish Government Tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022-2026 impact assessment sets out the inequalities experienced by people with a protected characteristic. For example it confirms that Disabled people are more likely to work in 'lower paid employment and have less access to fair work' and that 'minority ethnic people continue to experience racism, discrimination as well as language and cultural barriers'. [Chapter 1:](#)

From data collected about the SWF we know the following groups apply for assistance:

- people experiencing mental or physical health problems
- people with chronic and terminal illnesses
- people looking after children, including lone parents and kinship carers
- people experiencing eviction or re-possession
- homeless people
- people experiencing addiction problems
- carers
- older people
- people with a conviction or history of offending
- families caring for a person on temporary release from prison
- people experiencing family breakdown
- people fleeing domestic abuse
- pregnant women, women who have recently given birth or people adopting a child
- unemployed people
- care leavers, including young people

<b>Equality Groups</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Older people, people in the middle years	As noted above.
Children and young people children	As noted above.
Women, men and transgender people (includes issues relating to pregnancy and maternity)	As noted above.
Disabled people (includes physical disability, learning disability, sensory impairment, long-term medical conditions, mental health problems)	As noted above.
Minority ethnic people (includes Gypsy/Travellers, migrant workers)	As noted above.
Refugees and asylum seekers	As noted above.
People with different religions or beliefs (includes people with no religion or belief)	As noted above.
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual people	As noted above.

<p>People who are unmarried, married or in a civil partnership</p>	
<p><b>Those vulnerable to falling into poverty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• People on benefits</li> <li>• Lone Parents</li> <li>• Care experienced children and young people</li> <li>• Carers (including young carers)</li> <li>• Homeless people</li> <li>• Those involved in the community justice system</li> <li>• People with low literacy/numeracy</li> <li>• Families with 3 or more children</li> <li>• Those with a child/ children under 1</li> </ul>	<p>As noted above.</p>
<p><b>Geographical communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural/ semi-rural communities</li> <li>• Urban Communities</li> <li>• Coastal communities</li> <li>• Those living in the most deprived communities (bottom 20% SIMD areas)</li> </ul>	<p>As noted above.</p>
<p><b>People with communication needs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaelic Language Speakers {refer if necessary to the Council’s Gaelic Language Plan}</li> <li>• British Sign Language (BSL) users {refer if necessary to the Council’s BSL Plan}</li> <li>• English as a Second Language</li> <li>• Other e.g. Deafblind, Plain English, Large Print</li> </ul>	<p>All information is accessed in first point of contact via Scot.gov. Signposts to local authorities. Administering to a national standard such as methods of application (Telephone, paper and online) and takes into account the needs of individuals in relation to accessibility.</p> <p>We use Scottish Government BSL connect to support access to this service for BSL users and information on the website can be accessed in different languages and formats with the Recite me function.</p> <p>Other needs are met once we are made aware of a person’s requirements. We also endeavour to use Plain English and easy read formats if required.</p>

**2.5 Are there any other factors which will affect the way this policy impacts on the community or staff groups?**

Moving to the 'high most compelling' criteria will undermine the positive outcomes from the implementation of the broader grant to families etc. Fewer people will be eligible and as a consequence poverty and inequality will increase and become further entrenched for those currently experiencing poverty.

**2.6 Is any part of this policy/ service to be carried out wholly or partly by contractors?**

If yes, how have you included equality and human rights considerations into the contract?

N/A

**2.7 Have you considered how you will communicate information about this policy or policy change to those affected e.g. to those with hearing loss, speech impairment or English as a second language?**

Yes. The Scheme is well publicised by the Scottish Government and third sector partners. We will ensure that relevant formats and communications are in place to ensure those requiring communication in specific formats is met.

**2.8 Please consider how your policy will impact on each of the following?**

**Equality and Human rights**

- Promotes / advances equality of opportunity e.g. improves access to and quality of services
- Promotes good relations within and between people with protected characteristics and tackles harassment
- Promotes participation, is inclusive and gives people control over decisions which affect them
- Preserves dignity and self-respect of individuals (does not lead to degrading treatment or stigma)
- Builds support networks, resilience, community capacity

Comments: Potential impacts will include a detriment in relation to resilience, dignity and self-respect as this policy supports people and families who struggle to maintain a stable home life and constraints on the fund will therefore impact negatively on the council's capacity to support these groups. The implications of this are well documented and researched nationally.

**Socio-Economic Disadvantage / reducing poverty**

- Maximises income and/or reduces income inequality

- Helps young people into positive destinations
- Aids those returning to and those progressing within the labour market
- Improves employability skills, including literacy and numeracy
- Reduces the costs of taking part in activities and opportunities
- Reduces the cost of living

Comments :

As above. The lack of resource may have a detrimental impact on individuals’ ability to sustain tenancies, increase individual cost of living (carpets etc.)

The Dignity and respect agenda will be undermined: [Treating everyone with dignity and respect - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

- Tackling Climate Change**
- Reduces the need to travel or increases access to sustainable forms of transport
  - Minimises waste / encourages resource efficiency / contributes to the circular economy
  - Ensures goods / services are from ethical, responsible and sustainable sources
  - Improves energy efficiency / uses low carbon energy sources
  - Protects and/or enhances natural environments / habitats / biodiversity
  - Promotes the transition to a low carbon economy
  - Prepares and/or adapts communities for climate change impacts

Comments:

The changes present an opportunity to promote sustainability through the reuse of some goods ([Managing waste - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)), although this is unlikely to apply to flooring.

- Corporate Parenting and Care Experienced Young People**
- Impacts on care experienced young people
  - Provides opportunities or reduces opportunities to participate in activities which are designed to promote the wellbeing of young people
  - Adversely affects the wellbeing of young people
  - Adversely impacts on outcomes for care experienced young people

Comments:

Whilst young people do access the fund, the adverse impact will not be as great as they have recourse to other help and support.

### Section 3. Action Plan

What, if any changes will be made to the proposal/ policy as a result of the assessment?

Changes to be made	Expected outcome of the change	Resources Required	Timeline	Responsible person

#### For consideration of the Head of Service

Can you identify any cumulative impacts on equality groups or vulnerable people arising from this policy, when considered alongside other changes across other services?

The impact of this change on equality groups and vulnerable people has been documented above. It is possible that in year pressures on the Care and Repair fund could result in a cumulative impact to elderly and disabled service users who require support to repair, improve or adapt their home if it is no longer suitable to their needs.

#### Sign off by Head of Service

Name: E. Dunnet

Date: 27 August 2023

