

Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment 00983 (Version 1)

SECTION ONE: ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Service & Division:	Children's Services Planning & Resources	Lead Officer Name:	Kenny McNeill
		Team:	Planning & Resources
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Proposal:	Income Generation - Increase in Fees and Charges	Reference No:	

What is the Proposal?	Budget & Other Financial Decision	Policy (New or Change)	HR Policy & Practice	Change to Service Delivery / Service Design
	Yes	No	No	No

Who does the Proposal affect?	Service Users	Members of the Public	Employees	Job Applicants
	Yes	No	No	No

Other, please specify:

Identify the main aims and projected outcome of this proposal (please add date of each update):

06/02/2025	Increase income across five broad categories of discretionary fee income sources (School Lets, Breakfast Clubs, School Meals, Childcare Fees, Instrumental Music) within Education. From these there is a total forecast income of around £2.662M. *Instrumental Music fees and charges are covered in a separate EPIA. The increase in fees and charges for school lets are to align with charges from other Council services where an Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment will already have been undertaken.

SECTION TWO: FINANCIAL INFORMATION

For budget changes ONLY please include information below:			Benchmark, e.g. Scottish Average
Current spend on this service (£'0000s)	Total:	Breakfast Clubs net cost was £240K (23/24)	
Reduction to this service budget (£'0000s)	Per Annum:		
Increase to this service budget (£'000s)	Per Annum:	<p>Childcare Fees Projected service income increase of £55k to £435k - based on current uptake level.</p> <p>Breakfast Clubs Projected service income increase of £9k to £71k.</p> <p>School Meals Projected service income increase of £157k to £1.986M</p>	
If this is a change to a charge or concession please complete.	Current Annual Income Total:		
	Expected Annual Income Total:		
If this is a budget decision, when will the saving be achieved?	Start Date:	01/04/2025	
	End Date (if any):		

SECTION THREE: EVIDENCE

Please include any evidence or relevant information that has influenced the decisions contained in this EPIA. (This could include demographic profiles; audits; research; health needs assessments; national guidance or legislative requirements and how this relates to the protected characteristic groups.)

A - Quantitative Evidence

This is evidence which is numerical and should include the number people who use the service and the number of people from the protected characteristic groups who might be affected by changes to the service.

Childcare

The Council has 260 available childcare places for 2-year-olds. These places are available across 10 ELC establishments. Occupancy levels are tracked on a weekly basis as there is regular movement of 2-year-olds throughout the year. Of the 260 places available, around 220 are occupied by funded eligible 2-year-olds and the remaining places are available for fee-paying parents.

Breakfast Clubs

Breakfast Clubs offer primary pupils access to a breakfast each school day and are supervised by a Support for Learning Assistant (SfLA). Approximately 500 breakfasts are provided by Breakfast Clubs each day, 60% are paid for by families and 40% are funded.

The Council currently have 25 Breakfast Clubs operating across our Primary Schools.

School Meals

The Catering Service offers a nutritionally balanced meal or snack at lunchtime in schools. Almost 20% of all pupils (4,265) are awarded Free School Meals on the grounds of low income. In primary schools there is a 3-week menu cycle which is free to all primary 1 to 5 pupils in line with the Scottish Government's Universal Free School Meal roll out. This roll out will be extended to primary 6 and 7 from February 2025 in Falkirk Council, commencing with around 300 children from families in receipt of Scottish Child Payment. Thereafter the roll out will be extended to the remaining 3,000 primary 6 and 7 pupils as soon as practically possible.

For Secondary aged pupils, entitlement is based on low income so there may be families on the periphery of the criteria who may be negatively impacted by the increases.

All pupils in our special schools receive free school meals. Falkirk also extended this to the two ASN wings at Kinnaird and Maddiston Primary Schools as a local concessionary arrangement, recognising the complex nature of the pupils' needs. While these wings are not designated special schools, the level of support required differs from that of ASN provisions in other primary and secondary schools, where most pupils access a mainstream curriculum.

B - Qualitative Evidence This is data which describes the effect or impact of a change on a group of people, e.g. some information provided as part of performance reporting.

Social - case studies; personal / group feedback / other

Childcare

A benchmarking exercise was carried out with other local authorities for charges relating to additional childcare. This exercise showed that charges in Falkirk are currently below those of comparators, giving scope for an increase.

Despite the cost of providing childcare to 2-year-olds being higher than to 3- & 4-year-olds, Falkirk has operated a 'flat rate' charge for children aged 2-5 years. This is out of step with charging policies of other local authorities. Therefore, recommended charges have been reviewed to reflect benchmarking where childcare fees and charges are scaled to recover costs.

There is anticipated growth in demand for childcare in nursery provision over school holiday periods from summer 2025. Fees were set to allow the service to be remain accessible and competitive.

Best Judgement:

Has best judgement been used in place of data/research/evidence?	No
Who provided the best judgement and what was this based on?	
What gaps in data / information were identified?	
Is further research necessary?	No
If NO, please state why.	This proposal relates to discretionary fees and charges that will be submitted to Council as part of the service's budget proposals in March 2025.

SECTION FOUR: ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with individuals or organisations affected by the policy or proposal must take place

Has the proposal / policy / project been subject to engagement or consultation with service users taking into account their protected characteristics and socio-economic status?	No	
If YES, please state who was engagement with.		
If NO engagement has been conducted, please state why.	The proposal is submitted as part of the service budget savings options.	
How was the engagement carried out?	What were the results from the engagement? Please list...	
Focus Group	No	
Survey	No	
Display / Exhibitions	No	
User Panels	No	
Public Event	No	
Other: please specify		
Has the proposal / policy/ project been reviewed / changed as a result of the engagement?	Yes / No	
Have the results of the engagement been fed back to the consultees?	Yes / No	
Is further engagement recommended?	No	

SECTION FIVE: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

Equality Protected Characteristics: What will the impact of implementing this proposal be on people who share characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 or are likely to be affected by the proposal / policy / project? This section allows you to consider other impacts, e.g. poverty, health inequalities, community justice, carers etc.

Protected Characteristic	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide evidence of the impact on this protected characteristic.
Age			✓	<p>Secondary aged pupils will be impacted more than Primary aged pupils with the increase in fees relating to school meals as there is universal entitlement for P1-5 and the criteria for eligibility for P6-7 is different to Secondary criteria.</p> <p>Around 60% of primary aged pupils/families in 25 of our primary schools will be impacted by the increase in fees for Breakfast Clubs.</p>
Disability	✓			We do not have data identifying an impact on this group.
Sex	✓			We do not have data identifying an impact on this group.
Ethnicity	✓			We do not have data identifying an impact on this group.
Religion / Belief / non-Belief	✓			We do not have data identifying an impact on this group.
Sexual Orientation	✓			We do not have data identifying an impact on this group.
Transgender	✓			We do not have data identifying an impact on this group.
Pregnancy / Maternity	✓			We do not have data identifying an impact on this group.
Marriage / Civil Partnership	✓			We do not have data identifying an impact on this group.
Poverty			✓	<p>Those in receipt of Free School Meals and will have the cost of Breakfast Clubs paid through Pupil Equity Funding - therefore, won't be impacted by the increase in fees and charges.</p> <p>Service users who are on the periphery of eligibility may be impacted by the financial increase (including families experiencing in-work poverty who do not meet the criteria for FSM or require to pay for childcare).</p>
Care Experienced	✓			We do not have data identifying an impact on this group.
Other, health, community justice, carers etc.	✓			We do not have data identifying an impact on this group.

Public Sector Equality Duty: Scottish Public Authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance quality of opportunity and foster good relations. Scottish specific duties include:

	Evidence of Due Regard
Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination (harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct):	This policy is not relevant to the duty.
Advance Equality of Opportunity:	Children who are entitled to Free School Meals will be provided with them and Pupil Equity Funding will continue to cover the cost of Breakfast Clubs. 1140 hours of free childcare will continue to be provided to all parents as well as places for funded 2 year olds.
Foster Good Relations (promoting understanding and reducing prejudice):	This policy is not relevant to the duty.

SECTION SIX: PARTNERS / OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Which sectors are likely to have an interest in or be affected by the proposal / policy / project?		Describe the interest / affect.
Business	No	
Councils	No	
Education Sector	No	
Fire	No	
NHS	No	
Integration Joint Board	No	
Police	No	
Third Sector	No	
Other(s): please list and describe the nature of the relationship / impact.		

SECTION SEVEN: ACTION PLANNING

Mitigating Actions: If you have identified impacts on protected characteristic groups in Section 5 please summarise these in the table below detailing the actions you are taking to mitigate or support this impact. If you are not taking any action to support or mitigate the impact you should complete the No Mitigating Actions section below instead.

Identified Impact	To Who	Action(s)	Lead Officer	Evaluation and Review Date	Strategic Reference to Corporate Plan / Service Plan / Quality Outcomes
Poverty - Breakfast Clubs	Young People and Families	Pupil Equity Funding will continue to be used to fund Breakfast Clubs for pupils in SIMD 1 and 2.	Kenny McNeill	01/08/2025	Cost of the School Day; Building a Fairer Falkirk 2024-2029
Poverty - School Meals	Young People and Families	The roll out of universal Free School Meal Entitlement to Primary 6 and 7 pupils will commence in February 2025 beginning with 300 pupils from families in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment. The roll out to the remaining 3,000 pupils will commence as soon as is practically possible, thereafter.	Kenny McNeill	01/08/2025	Cost of the School Day; Building a Fairer Falkirk 2024-2029

No Mitigating Actions

Please explain why you do not need to take any action to mitigate or support the impact of your proposals.

Are actions being reported to Members?

Yes

If yes when and how ?

This proposal will go to Council as part of the service's budget proposals in March 2025.

SECTION EIGHT: ASSESSMENT OUTCOME

Only one of following statements best matches your assessment of this proposal / policy / project. Please select one and provide your reasons.

No major change required	No	
The proposal has to be adjusted to reduce impact on protected characteristic groups	No	
Continue with the proposal but it is not possible to remove all the risk to protected characteristic groups	Yes	As there may be a negative impact for those on the periphery of eligibility for the proposed increase in fees and charges (poverty) and the specific impacts on children based on sector (Age) for each specific fee, it is not possible to remove all risk to those individuals.
Stop the proposal as it is potentially in breach of equality legislation	No	

SECTION NINE: LEAD OFFICER SIGN OFF

Lead Officer:

Signature:	<i>Paul Wilcox</i>	Date:	06/02/2025
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SECTION TEN: EPIA TASK GROUP ONLY

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF EPIA:	Has the EPIA demonstrated the use of data, appropriate engagement, identified mitigating actions as well as ownership and appropriate review of actions to confidently demonstrate compliance with the general and public sector equality duties?	No
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ASSESSMENT FINDINGS	Consultation has not taken place. High level data is provided for those who use these provisions, but this is not broken down to each protected characteristic - only age and poverty are noted.	
If YES, use this box to highlight evidence in support of the assessment of the EPIA		
If NO, use this box to highlight actions needed to improve the EPIA		

Where adverse impact on diverse communities has been identified and it is intended to continue with the proposal / policy / project, has justification for continuing <u>without making changes been made</u>?	Yes	If YES, please describe: It has only been noted that it is not possible to remove all risk to individuals, without any justifications.
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LEVEL OF IMPACT: The EPIA Task Group has agreed the following level of impact on the protected characteristic groups highlighted within the EPIA

LEVEL		COMMENTS
HIGH	No	
MEDIUM	Yes	There will be a greater likelihood for a negative impact for those on the periphery of eligibility for the proposed increase in fees and charges (poverty) and the specific impacts on children based on sector (Age) for each specific fee. 15.4% will be impacted by increase of childcare cost. 60% will be impacted increase in breakfast club cost. Free school meals are be extended to all Primary school children, therefore Secondary pupils who do not receive free school meals will be impacted (quantity not provided in EPIA).
LOW	No	

SECTION ELEVEN: CHIEF OFFICER SIGN OFF

Director / Head of Service:			
Signature:	<i>Jon Reid</i>	Date:	11/02/2025