

Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment 00972 (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:	Cessation of Discretionary School Bus Contracts	Reference No:	

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

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):

27/01/2025	Removal of discretionary funding for school transport for pupils who are not eligible as per the policy and mileage criteria.
04/02/2025	A net saving will be achieved over 2 financial years – 25/26 and 26/27

SECTION TWO: FINANCIAL INFORMATION

For budget changes ONLY please include information below:			Benchmark, e.g. Scottish Average
Current spend on this service (£'0000s)	Total:	£200K (includes eligible pupils)	
Reduction to this service budget (£'0000s)	Per Annum:	£157K over two financial years (25/26 and 26/27)	
Increase to this service budget (£'000s)	Per Annum:		
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:	01/08/2025	
	End Date (if any):	30/06/2027	

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.

This proposal impacts four bus contracts:

Shieldhill – Braes HS - 142 pupils

Maddiston – Braes HS - 641 pupils

Lionthorn – Falkirk HS - 149 pupils

Hallglen – Graeme HS - 628 pupils

At present, the uptake of the NEC Travel Card for young people is 89.14% (as of January 2025) for all 12-17 year olds across Falkirk. The breakdown by age is:

12: 65%

13: 84%

14: 90%

15: 93%

16: 103%

17: 103%

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

Pupils from primary and secondary school use the bus services listed in Quantitative Evidence. For Primary pupils, buses will still be required.

For the Shieldhill - Braes HS bus, pupils using the bus are all non-distance entitled. There is an alternative safe walking route to school that can be used.

For the Maddiston - Braes HS buses, only one bus of the two is being removed. The remaining bus service will serve those pupils who are distance entitled.

For the Lionthorn - Falkirk HS bus, this service is a legacy provision preceding the creation of a footpath between Slamannan Road and Falkirk High Station. The pupils who use the service are non-distance entitled and there is now a safe walking route to Falkirk High School.

For the Hallglen to Graeme HS bus, pupils using the bus are all non-distance entitled. There is a safe walking route from Hallglen.

Best Judgement:	
Has best judgement been used in place of data/research/evidence?	Yes
Who provided the best judgement and what was this based on?	Best judgement has been used based on our knowledge of alternative transport methods for pupils to get to school should the decision be taken to remove these transport options.
What gaps in data / information were identified?	
Is further research necessary?	Yes
If NO, please state why.	

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.	This is discretionary bus contracts for non-distance entitled pupils, that are in place due to historical arrangements,	
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?	Yes	

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>There are both positive and negative impacts for pupils. With the removal of travel for non-eligible pupils, this will be an inconvenience for parents and pupils and is likely to impact on younger children as opposed to older young people who may have greater road sense and responsibility. However, Scottish Government guidance to parents advises that all pupils being walked to school should be accompanied by a responsible adult.</p> <p>However, there is the opportunity to encourage and increase the uptake in active travel to and from school which will benefit young people's health and wellbeing.</p> <p>All Under 22 year olds are eligible for a free bus pass for public buses. For any pupil that has their school bus transport removed, there is the opportunity to use a public bus to school free of charge where available.</p>
Disability	✓			<p>We do not have specific data relating to the number of pupils with a registered disability on school transport.</p> <p>Specific transport arrangements for children with an identified additional support need is not impacted by this proposal.</p>
Sex			✓	<p>This may have an impact on women more than men where pupils are dropped off at school instead of using a public bus or walking to school.</p>
Ethnicity	✓			<p>We do not have data to measure the likely impact on this group.</p>
Religion / Belief / non-Belief	✓			<p>We do not have data to measure the likely impact on this group.</p>
Sexual Orientation	✓			<p>We do not have data to measure the likely impact on this group.</p>
Transgender	✓			<p>We do not have data to measure the likely impact on this group.</p>
Pregnancy / Maternity	✓			<p>We do not have data to measure the likely impact on this group.</p>
Marriage / Civil Partnership	✓			<p>We do not have data to measure the likely impact on this group.</p>

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:

				<p>bus to school free of charge where available.</p> <p>There may be pupils who do not live near a public bus route who may be affected negatively if they live in poverty.</p>
Care Experienced			✓	<p>There is a possibility that a negative impact could be felt by care experienced individuals in kinship care where they are living with an elderly grandparent who would not be able to accompany them to school.</p>
Other, health, community justice, carers etc.		✓		<p>There is the possibility of a benefit to young people's health and wellbeing through more active travel.</p>
Risk (Identify other risks associated with this change)				

	Evidence of Due Regard
Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination (harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct):	<p>This policy is not relevant to the duty.</p>
Advance Equality of Opportunity:	<p>The service is currently researching the numbers of children who will be able to take a public bus to school using their under 22 bus pass. Specific transport arrangements for pupils with Additional Support Needs have not been included as part of this proposal.</p>
Foster Good Relations (promoting understanding and reducing prejudice):	<p>This policy is not relevant to the duty.</p>

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	Yes	This proposal is likely to impact the bus contractors as there will a reduction in income from the Council.
Councils	No	
Education Sector	No	
Fire	No	
NHS	No	
Integration Joint Board	No	
Police	Yes	There is a possibility of increased footfall on public buses and active travel routes where personal and public safety would fall within the remit of Police Scotland.
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, Care Experienced	Pupils	The Service will continue to promote uptake for the NEC Travel Card and will help promote public bus routes for those impacted. The Service will also promote Active Travel to and from school.	Kenny McNeill	01/08/2025	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 will be considered as part of the Council's 25/26 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	Yes	The proposal relates to non-distance entitled pupils who have access to specific transport to school via bus. The service can mitigate any impacts via the NEC Travel Card and promotion of active travel for pupils.
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	No	
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:	05/02/2025
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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 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	Data on protected characteristics of those likely to be impacted by this change is limited. Lacks engagement to understand possible negative impact and mitigations
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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 / No	If YES, please describe:
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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	Yes / No	
MEDIUM	Yes	Impacts significant number of young people with potential impact on parents and carers. Impact uncertain due to lack of evidence.
LOW	No	

SECTION ELEVEN: CHIEF OFFICER SIGN OFF

Director / Head of Service:			
Signature:	<i>Jon Reid</i>	Date:	12/02/2025