

Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment 00980 (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:	Remove all Consortia travel arrangements (apart from school-college transport)	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):	
28/01/2025	The proposal aims to completely remove all transport funding for young people involved in consortia arrangements between schools. Young People will be able to access these courses remotely from their own school.
28/01/2025	Maintain transport funding for young people involved in consortia arrangements between their school and Forth Valley College.

SECTION TWO: FINANCIAL INFORMATION

For budget changes ONLY please include information below:			Benchmark, e.g. Scottish Average
Current spend on this service (£'0000s)	Total:	Total spend: £166,514 (Consortia Bus: £103,000) (Consortia Taxi: £63,514)	
Reduction to this service budget (£'0000s)	Per Annum:	£44.5K split 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.

Total number of Consortia pupils: 340 (70 of which are school to school consortia; the remainder go to Forth Valley College)

Total transported by taxis: 80

Total transported by buses: 262

Number of taxis: 56

Number of buses: 6

The majority of those transported by taxi are school to school consortia with bus transport accounting for school to Forth Valley College consortia.

As of February 2025, there are 27 distinct subjects across our High Schools (11 Advanced Higher and 16 Higher) delivered via in-person consortia arrangements. All eight of our mainstream High Schools are involved in leading a subject delivered through in-person consortia. **There are currently 72 pupils engaged in these arrangements.** Broken down by school this is:

- **Bo'ness Academy: 9 pupils** (schools attending are Larbert HS, Falkirk HS, Graeme HS and Grangemouth HS; subjects include High Psychology, Higher Philosophy, Higher Graph Comm, Advanced Higher English, Advanced Higher Music and Advanced Higher Biology)
- **Braes High School: 26 pupils** (schools attending are Bo'ness Academy, Denny HS, Graeme HS, Grangemouth HS, Larbert HS and St Mungo's HS; subjects include Higher Photography, Higher Philosophy, Advanced Higher English, Advanced Higher Biology, Advanced Higher Art, Higher Human Biology, Higher Media, Advanced Higher French, Advanced Higher Geography, Advanced Higher Modern Studies, Higher Psychology, Advanced Higher Spanish, Advanced Higher PE)
- **Falkirk High School: 4 pupils** (schools attending are Graeme HS, Larbert HS and St Mungo's HS; subjects include Advanced Higher Physics, Higher Italian, Higher RMPS and Advanced Higher Drama)
- **Graeme High School: 10 pupils** (schools attending are Braes HS, Falkirk HS, Grangemouth HS and Larbert HS; subjects include Higher Chemistry, Advanced Higher Drama, Advanced Higher Geography, Higher HFT, Higher History and Higher Human Biology)
- **Grangemouth High School: 16 pupils** (schools attending are Braes HS, Graeme HS and Larbert HS; subjects include Advanced Higher Biology, Higher Accounts, Advanced Higher English, Higher German, Advanced Higher Drama, Advanced Higher Physics and Higher Biology)
- **Larbert High School: 2 pupils** (attending St Mungo's HS for Advanced Higher Graph Comm)

- St Mungo's High School: 5 pupils (schools attending are Braes HS, Denny HS, Falkirk HS and Larbert HS; subjects include Higher Geography, Advanced Higher French, Higher HFT and Higher Computing)

Please note, the number of pupils involved and the number of subjects involved may change throughout the course of the year dependant on uptake. The above info is as of February 2025.

All pupils engaged in both virtual and in-person consortia are between the ages of 15 and 17. The cohort engaged in consortia changes each year.

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

As part of the mitigations detailed in Section 7, the service will explore how the timetables in each High School can accommodate virtual or hybrid classes to ensure pupils still have the option of undertaking subjects they would otherwise have the option of pursuing via in-person consortia arrangements.

There is already a Falkirk Virtual Consortia through Connected Learning. Whilst this is a separate offer to that of in-person consortia, it provides an insight as to how schools and the service provide a virtual consortia arrangement (see below).

Falkirk Virtual Consortia

Timeline:

- 2019-22: 2 subjects (Advanced Higher History and Higher Politics)
- 2022-23: 4 subjects (Advanced Higher History, Advanced Higher Maths, Higher Politics and Higher Philosophy)
- 2023-24: 5 subjects (Advanced Higher History, Advanced Higher Maths, Advanced Higher Chemistry, Advanced Higher English and Higher Politics)
- 2024-25: 8 subjects (Advanced Higher History, Advanced Higher Maths, Advanced Higher Chemistry, Higher Politics, Higher Computing, Higher Business, Higher Psychology and Level 7 Software Development)

At present, the 2025-26 Falkirk Virtual Learning Offer will include:

- Level 6/Higher Courses (Psychology, Computing (2 columns available), Human Biology, Accounts, Politics and French)
- Level 7/Advanced Higher Courses (Chemistry, Mathematics, Graphic Communication, History and L7 Software Development)

Access to these courses are available via Teams or Google Classroom and include between 4 and 5 periods per week of 'live learning' online - all other periods are self-directed study/learning set out by their teacher. There are termly in-person meet-ups with classes.

The following are the 2023/24 Falkirk Virtual Consortia exam results:

Advanced Higher Maths (Grade: Number of Pupils (%))

A: 7 (50%)

B: 2 (14.3%)

C: 1 (7.1%)

D: 2 (14.3%)

F: 2 (14.3%)

Comparison:

2022/23: 25 pupils enrolled (23 pupils presented) - 74% pass rate

2023/24: 30 pupils enrolled (14 pupils presented) - 71.4% pass rate

Advanced Higher History

A: 1 (11.1%)

B: 6 (66.7%)

C: 2 (22.2%)

D: 0

F: 0

Comparison:

2019/20: 7 pupils enrolled - 100% pass rate

2020/21: 30 pupils enrolled - 100% pass rate

2021/22: 31 pupils enrolled (26 pupils presented) - 85% pass rate

2022/23: 31 pupils enrolled (18 pupils presented) - 83% pass rate

2023/24: 12 pupils enrolled (9 pupils presented) - 100% pass rate

Advanced Higher Chemistry

A: 2 (22.2%)

B: 3 (33.3%)

C: 1 (11.1%)

D: 3 (33.3%)

F: 0

*First year course has run through Falkirk Virtual Consortia

Advanced Higher English

A: 2 (28.6%)

B: 2 (28.6%)

C: 2 (28.6%)

D: 1 (14.3%)

F: 0

*First year course has run through Falkirk Virtual Consortia

Higher Politics

A: 7 (18.4%)

B: 7 (18.4%)

C: 6 (15.8%)

D: 5 (13.2%)

F: 13 (34.2%)

Comparison:

2019/20: 11 pupils enrolled - 100% pass rate

2020/21: 22 pupils enrolled - 95% pass rate

2021/22: 55 pupils enrolled (41 pupils presented) - 82% pass rate

2022/23: 56 pupils enrolled (38 pupils presented) - 74% pass rate

2023/24: 50 pupils enrolled (38 pupils presented) - 53% pass rate

As of February 2025, the following are the number of pupils sitting each subject as part of the Virtual Consortia arrangements (please note some of these numbers include the pupils in the school with the teacher):

- Higher Psychology: 27
- Higher Computing: 13
- Level 7 Software Development: 7
- Higher Politics: 26
- Advanced Higher Maths: 24
- Advanced Higher Chemistry: 17
- Advanced Higher History: 6

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?

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.	The cohort of young people who will engage in consortia (whether virtual consortia or in-person) for 25/26 is currently unknown as the cohort changes each year.	
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	✓			The proposal is to replace consortia travel with a hybrid/virtual offer. This will maintain current consortia curricular opportunities for young people. It will also negate the need the travel and potentially lose learning time in the process). Given the cohort each year tends to be between the ages of 15-17, this will have a particular impact on young people in those year groups.
Disability	✓			We are unable to measure the impact on this protected characteristic group as the 25/26 cohort is unknown.
Sex	✓			We are unable to measure the impact on this protected characteristic group as the 25/26 cohort is unknown.
Ethnicity	✓			We are unable to measure the impact on this protected characteristic group as the 25/26 cohort is unknown.
Religion / Belief / non-Belief	✓			We are unable to measure the impact on this protected characteristic group as the 25/26 cohort is unknown.
Sexual Orientation	✓			We are unable to measure the impact on this protected characteristic group due to the lack of relevant data.
Transgender	✓			We are unable to measure the impact on this protected characteristic group due to the lack of relevant data.
Pregnancy / Maternity	✓			We are unable to measure the impact on this protected characteristic group due to the lack of relevant data.
Marriage / Civil Partnership	✓			We are unable to measure the impact on this protected characteristic group due to the lack of relevant data.
Poverty	✓			We are unable to measure the impact on this protected characteristic group as the 25/26 cohort is unknown.
Care Experienced	✓			We are unable to measure the impact on this protected characteristic group as the 25/26 cohort is unknown.

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:

Risk (Identify other risks associated with this change)	
	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:	The service is exploring how subjects can be delivered through a virtual/hybrid offer building upon the existing and increasing hybrid offer currently delivered via Connected Learning. The aim will be to ensure young people are given the opportunity to access subjects within their own school setting and maximise learning time.
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	Yes	This proposal will likely impact local transport providers who are used as part of consortia arrangements. This will have a particular impact on taxi companies who provide transport for consortia.
Councils	No	
Education Sector	Yes	This will change how consortia arrangements are delivered in our school settings moving forward and will lead to an increased virtual/hybrid offer.
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
Removal of Consortia Transport for pupils engaging in in-person consortia (Age)	Pupils aged 15-17	<p>Schools will increase our hybrid/virtual offer to ensure pupils have a wide range of curricular opportunities that can be delivered whilst remaining in their own school setting. In-person consortia can also still take place where pupils wish to use their NEC Travel Card to travel to another school.</p> <p>The Council will also be upgrading the IT kit in each Secondary School to support the delivery of new hybrid models, negating the need to travel.</p>	Scott Lavery	27/06/2025	Connected Learning; Council of the Future

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 only identified impact is likely to be neutral as the curricular choices currently available to pupils engaged in in-person consortia will be maintained under a virtual/hybrid offer for future cohorts.
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 / No	
LOW	Yes	Whilst this will impact young people no negative impacts have been identified by the service

SECTION ELEVEN: CHIEF OFFICER SIGN OFF

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