



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Template reviewed Nov 2021

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) was introduced as part of the Equality Act 2010, which protects people from discrimination in the workplace, in the provision of services and in wider society.

The duty requires all public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people

Public bodies demonstrate this due regard in different ways, including producing robust equality impact assessments when considering changes to policies and services.

An EqIA enables us to check the potential impacts on residents and employees of our policies, services and projects. It's an opportunity to challenge how we currently do things.

Carrying out an EqIA should not create extra work; it should be part of your normal service planning process. Most of the information required should already be available to you through other work already undertaken e.g. service user monitoring, analysis of complaints and national research.

The purpose of an EqIA is to *take account* of equality as plans develop, to promote and assist the consideration of equalities issues arising in plans and proposals and to ensure that where possible adverse or disproportionate impacts are minimised and positive impacts are maximised. As such where possible an EqIA should be started at the outset of a project/proposal and continually be developed and reviewed until a final proposal is adopted. An EqIA should be used to ensure decision makers have all the information they need regarding potential impacts to ensure they have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when making judgements.

Carrying out EqIAs should be an integral part of policy or service development/change and larger projects may need more than one EqIA if different areas are impacted by the change.

Any project that requires consultation will automatically require an EqIA.

All approved and signed EqIAs are recorded in a central register. Please email your completed draft EqIA to equalities@buckinghamshire.gov.uk. Previous EqIAs can be made available for information upon request. For any questions or if you require support in completing your EqIA please contact Maria Damigos and Natalie Donhou Morley directly.



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Part A (Initial assessment) - Section 1 - Background

Proposal/Brief Title: **Government funding supporting Buckinghamshire Residents** – proposal for allocation of Household Support Fund grant

OneDrive link to report/policy:

Related policies:

Date: 18/04/24

Type of strategy, policy, project or service: Proposal for use of Government funding to support Buckinghamshire residents who are most in need

Please tick one of the following:

- Existing**
- New or proposed
- Changing, update or revision
- Other (please explain)

This assessment was created by:

Name: Katie Galvin

Job Title: Strategic Lead – Financial Insecurity

Email address: katie.galvin@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Briefly describe the aims and objectives of the proposal below:

To provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significantly rising living costs

As per Government guidance, the Household Support Fund can be used to cover:

- Energy bills relating to heating, cooking or lighting; and water bills
- Support with food costs either through vouchers or cash.
- Other household essentials – this may include those linked to energy and water, for example sanitary products, boiler repair or servicing, warm clothing, purchase of fridge/freezers; or for wider essentials, for example broadband costs, phone costs, clothing, transport-related costs such as car repairs.
- Housing costs can be covered in exceptional circumstances and where existing housing schemes do not meet this exceptional need. For example, the fund cannot be used to provide mortgage support but can be used to cover historic rent arrears that have been built up prior to receipt of other benefits.



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- To cover reasonable administration costs, including staff costs, web page design, IT system costs and promotional activity and content to raise the profile of the scheme.
- Provide supplementary advice services to award recipients, including debt and benefit advice, where considered appropriate. Guidance indicates that there needs to be a connection between the funding provided for advice services and the practical support provided under the Household Support Fund.
- As before, the fund cannot be used to provide mortgage support.. Our proposals are in line with Government Guidance and are modelled around local understanding of need across different categories, informed by local intelligence and previous delivery of the funds. Funding will only be used for schemes that are free of charge for residents.

What outcomes do we want to achieve?

To provide appropriate support and assistance to vulnerable households as per the guidance from central government.

Does this proposal plan to withdraw a service, activity or presence? No

Please explain your answer: This is a further grant fund made available from Government to provide support to Buckinghamshire residents who are most in need.

Does this proposal plan to reduce a service, activity or presence? No

Please explain your answer: as above

Does this proposal plan to introduce, review or change a policy, strategy or procedure? No

Please explain your answer: No expected impact

Does this proposal affect service users and/or customers, or the wider community? Yes

Please explain your answer: Full details are set out in associated reports. The proposed allocation of this funding is in line with Government guidance and local intelligence. Applications are open to all and promoted through a variety of avenues.

Does this proposal affect employees? No



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Please explain your answer: No expected impact

Will employees require training to deliver this proposal? No

Please explain your answer: No expected impact as already in place to deal with previous funding

Has any engagement /consultation been carried out, or is planned in the future? No, although there is information gathering and consideration of information which we may receive and which helps to inform provision.

Please explain your answer: Delivery is in line with Government guidance, no requirement to consult on this proposal. However, schools are regular consultees and sharer of information and in addition we work closely with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) who are engaged in frontline delivery. A proportion of the funds are recommended to be used for VCS schemes and activities.

Section 2 - Impacts

Please highlight potential impacts (including unintended impacts or consequences) for each protected characteristic*/equality groups below. Where there are negative or positive impacts please give more details of the impact. Where the impacts are unclear please explain why. Age*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Internal knowledge indicates that age is not a significant factor in impact on finances. However where age is relevant this will be part of the decision/application process.

Where age can be utilised to indicate need within a household, assistance is being provided without application, for example families with children receiving free school meal support will be provided with specific support (see associated reports).

The funding process has been made as accessible as possible for all applicants. Older applicants may have difficulty with technology and there are a variety of application options to address this (direct online application, telephone call applications, representative application).

Disability*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Details: Government information has confirmed that those with disabilities are more likely to be affected by the current crisis and guidance is that this cohort should be



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targeted for support under the fund. We are also aware that residents with disabilities are more likely to be unable to increase their income through work, to be within a low income household or in receipt of benefits and therefore may be more likely to be eligible to benefit from the fund, in line with Government guidance. We note this as a positive impact in this assessment. Accessibility for those with disabilities has also been considered and variable options for take up have been provided (see above).

Pregnancy & maternity*

Positive Negative Unclear None

Details: Parents of very young children or those who are pregnant may be in low income households that cannot increase their income through work and support can therefore be a positive impact in this assessment

Race & Ethnicity*

Positive Negative **Unclear** None

Details: The scheme is targeted at providing support to individuals who are financially vulnerable and most in need across the County. There is no expectation that the funding available will be used disproportionately dependent on race or ethnicity. There may however be issues with the knowledge, opportunity and ability to apply/access the funding due to language or cultural barriers. We actively engage with the Voluntary and Community Sector to support different communities and use their knowledge to improve our offers and also support those organisations. This may include extra positive support for some communities to ensure equality where there are localised disproportionate effects.

It is known from local analysis that the highest proportions of individuals who are financially vulnerable, and/or experiencing poverty, are located in parts of Wycombe, Aylesbury and Chesham (Opportunity Bucks wards). Ethnicity monitoring data is available and analysis can be undertaken if required.

If any disproportionate effects or under representation appears, measures will be introduced to mitigate.

In relation to refugees or migrants experiencing extra financial hardships, there are targeted sources of assistance available however they may still be eligible for this funding and ongoing monitoring is expected to assist in recognising this.

Data relating to this will be cross referenced when analysis is conducted.

Marriage & Civil Partnership*

Positive Negative Unclear **None**

Details:



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Religion & Belief*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Details: The scheme is targeted at providing support to individuals who are financially vulnerable and most in need across the County. There is no expectation that the funding available will be used disproportionately dependent on religion or belief however the comments above regarding access may be relevant and this will be kept under review. We are therefore positively engaging with faith based Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to reach such cohorts as we are aware from internal experience that these can have a positive effect where there may be a barrier to access from this cohort.

Sex*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Details:

It is recognised that men are more likely to be homeless than women and are more likely to result in financial hardship regardless of the underlying reasons. Whilst there are other supportive schemes for homelessness, all applications under this scheme will be considered on an individual basis taking into account circumstances whilst having regard to the parameters and criteria set by government.

Sexual Orientation*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Details:

Gender Reassignment*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Details:

Gender identity

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Details:

Carers

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Details: Guidance requires carers to be positively considered within this scheme. It is expected that there will be a positive impact on carers and especially unpaid carers. Carers will include those looking after others with different protected characteristics and



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this scheme will be of overall benefit. We are engaging with, and will target, specific cohorts and carer support organisations.

Rural isolation

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Details: Residents in rural areas may experience higher fuel poverty, although this alone will not always drive a requirement to access support from the Household Support Fund and will be related to a number of factors including income, fuel type, etc. As all circumstances will be taken into account it is not expected that there will be any specific disproportionate effect on this group. Geographic data will be collected and monitored for residents accessing support from the service.

Single parent families

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Details: This cohort is expected to have intersectionality with other protected characteristics but as all circumstances, including childcare responsibilities, will be taken into account it is therefore expected that there will be a positive effect on this group. Please see above/associated reports regarding support for families in receipt of free school meal support.

Poverty (social & economic deprivation)

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Details: The scheme is targeted at providing support to individuals and households suffering financial issues for whatever reason and therefore overall this is considered to be a positive impact.

Military families / veterans

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Details: it is recognised that those leaving the military are more likely to be male and may be more likely to suffer financial hardship, possibly in conjunction with other protected characteristics. We will take account of all circumstances when considering funding allocation. We currently do not collect specific statistics in this regard but will endeavour to keep this under review and utilise any general intelligence gathered to help inform.

Section 3 – Is a full assessment required?

If you have answered yes to any of the initial assessment questions in section 1 of this EqIA, or have indicated a negative or unclear impact in section 2, it is likely you will need



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to complete part B of the EqIA form. Should you need guidance as to whether a full EqIA is needed at this time please contact Maria Damigos or Natalie Donhou Morley before continuing.

Following completion of part A, is part B completion required?

Yes

No

Explain your answer:

Utilisation of the Household Support Fund will be monitored and a full assessment will be completed if required at a later date.

The application and funding process has always been on the basis set out in the overall fund requirements from the Government and applications and individual circumstances, which include relevant protected characteristics. These are carefully considered to establish individual need. It is recognised that those households which are made up of individuals or individual applicants with protected characteristics are more likely to come within the cohort we are seeking to assist. In equalities terms it is considered that there is a positive benefit for those groups as outlined above. Previously, funding criteria was more prescriptive and now the Council has more flexibility to target those most in need without restriction.

Any barriers relating to accessing support from the fund are being considered as part of the communications for the scheme and work is being carried out to ensure that there is widespread reach and take up to ensure equal opportunity in this regard. This is supported by professionals such as probation officers and third sector organisations who we are working with, as well as the voluntary and community sector, and a number of ways to access including from other organisations on our behalf.

The consideration of merit and taking into account any relevant equalities matters during the application/funding/support process ensures there is no unlawful discrimination and encourages good relations among the whole community. To assist with this, equality monitoring has been introduced. This will be kept under review to allow measures to mitigate any equalities issues which are identified to be considered and introduced where appropriate.

Communications have developed a robust communications plan to target particular communities and those with protected characteristics where there may be barriers to engagement. This is being done to ensure early knowledge and access rather than exacerbating issues and hardship.

In addition, we will make deadlines clear on the website to ensure people not leaving applications too late – should deadlines be missed by applicants other funding to support should be utilised where possible.



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The scheme will be delivered in line with the strict criteria set by Government, and support through the scheme will be provided to residents who are in need. We will monitor our approach in line with the reporting requirements back to DWP, as well as local monitoring to ensure we are aware of which cohorts are accessing this support.

Have you completed an DPIA for this project/change? Whilst personal data, including some special category data, is required in order to ensure correct processing and allocation of funding, this is being done in compliance with the data protection legislation and using current technology with appropriate safeguards both in terms of process and storage.

(As you are completing an EqIA, you may also require a DPIA - for more information please contact dataprotection@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

Section 4 – Sign off (Only complete when NOT completing Part B)

Officer completing this assessment: Katie Galvin Date: 22/04/24

Equality advice sought from: Natalie Donhou Morely and Maria Damigos Date: 23/04/2024

Service Director sign off: Matt Everitt Date: 24/04/2024

Next review Date: 01/04/2025