

Equality Impact Assessment Template – Policy, function or strategy

This document should be completed when a new policy, function or strategy is introduced or when a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy is recommended.

1. Policy, function or strategy		
a.	Name/description of the policy, function or strategy ¹	Inverclyde Council Anti-Poverty Winter Fuel Payment
b.	Responsible organisation(s)/Lead Service	Finance Services
c.	Lead Officer	Tracy Bunton, Revenues and Benefits Manager
d.	Date of Impact Assessment	18 th October 2024
e.	Partners/other Services involved in the development of the policy, function or strategy	Education, Communities and Organisational Development Directorate; Department for Work and Pensions
f.	Is the policy, function or strategy?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New
		<input type="checkbox"/> Reviewed/Revised
g.	What is the purpose of the policy, function or strategy (include details of any new legislation which prompted the introduction of the policy, function or strategy or the substantive change to the policy, function or strategy)?	To support specified groups of pension age households with a one-off payment to help with fuel costs during winter 2024/25.
h.	What are the intended outcomes of the policy, function or strategy?	A payment will be made to specified groups of people liable for Council Tax (CT), increasing their income to meet fuel bills by early 2025. Council Tax Reduction (CTR) and Housing Benefit (HB) records will be reviewed to identify eligible households. The payment will reach those who, as at 11 th November 2024, were born before 23 rd September 1958; and

¹ Please attach details of the policy, function or strategy to this Template

		<input type="checkbox"/> whose HB or CT reduction (CTR) and HB records show they do not meet the income threshold for the Scottish Government Pension Age Winter Fuel Payment (PAWFP); or <input type="checkbox"/> are exempt from CT due to all chargeable adults in the household being classed as ‘Severely Mentally Impaired’ (SMI). This group will receive a credit to their CT account.
i.	Geographical area (Inverclyde-wide or a specific location)	Inverclyde-wide
j.	Which parts of the Equality Duty will the policy, function or strategy impact on?	<input type="checkbox"/> Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by The Equality Act 2010
		X Advance equality of opportunity between people of different groups
		<input type="checkbox"/> Foster good relations between people from different groups
k.	Will those who may be directly or indirectly affected by the policy, function or strategy be involved in its development?	No

2. Does the policy, function or strategy impact on:		
	Yes	No
a. Protected Characteristics under The Equality Act 2010: Age; Care experienced; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion and Belief; Sex; Sexual Orientation (see Section 3)	X	

b. Reducing inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage – Fairer Scotland Duty ² (see Section 6)	X	
c. Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33 ³ (see Section 7)	X	
d. Council Plan 2023/28 ⁴ (see Section 8)	X	
3. If ‘Yes’ is selected for any part of Section 2, please populate the other relevant Sections of this Template.		
4. If ‘No’ is selected for <u>every part</u> of Section 2, please state the reasons for this.		
<p>Please sign below and email a copy of this Template to Karen Barclay, Corporate Policy and Performance Officer: karen.barclay@inverclyde.gov.uk</p>		
Signature:	Date:	

3. Impact – Protected		
Which of the Protected Characteristics will the policy, function or strategy have an impact upon?		
	Impact	

² [Fairer Scotland Duty: guidance for public bodies](#)

³ [Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33](#)

⁴ [Council Plan 2023/28](#)

Protected Characteristic	Positive		Neutral	Negative		Reasons/Comments
	High	Low		High	Low	
Age	X					The payment will support older people who meet the qualifying criteria of the scheme over winter 2024/25 to help meet fuel bills.
Care experienced.			X			
Disability	X					The payment will support households exempt from CT due to all chargeable adults in the household being classed as SMI and who meet the qualifying age criteria of the scheme to help meet fuel bills.
Gender Reassignment			X			
Marriage and Civil Partnership			X			
Pregnancy and Maternity			X			
Race			X			
Religion and Belief			X			
Sex			X			
Sexual Orientation			X			

Other groups to consider.			X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carers 						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Armed Forces Covenant Duty 			X			

4. Which parts of the Equality Duty will the policy, function or strategy have an impact upon?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by The Equality Act 2010
X	Advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
<input type="checkbox"/>	Foster good relations between people from different groups

5. Impact – Groups	
From the information you have highlighted above, describe the positive and negative impacts and the groups affected under The Equality Act 2010.	
Positive impact + <i>(Describe groups affected.)</i>	Negative impact - <i>(Describe groups affected.)</i>
Age	

<p>Older people who meet the qualifying criteria will be supported financially during the winter of 2024/25.</p> <p><u>Disability</u></p> <p>Households exempt from CT due to all chargeable adults in the household being classed as SMI and who meet the qualifying age criteria will be supported financially during the winter of 2024/25.</p>	
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6. Impact – Fairer Scotland Duty

What impact will the policy, function or strategy have on reducing inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage?

Positive impact +	Neutral impact =	Negative impact -
X		

Briefly describe how the policy, function or strategy will impact on reducing inequalities of outcome.

Almost one third of local households (almost 1,100) who receive HB and or CTR are marginally outside the criteria for the PAWFP and will therefore not receive the Payment in winter 2024/25. The criteria to receive exemption from CT on the grounds of being SMI requires the applicant to be entitled to one or more specified disability related welfare benefits and for a registered medical practitioner to confirm a severe mental impairment of intelligence and social functioning (however caused) which appears to be permanent. Households in both groups who meet the qualifying age criteria will be supported financially during the winter of 2024/25. The one-off payment will free up or increase household income to meet fuel bills. The financial position of those who will qualify will improve, which is recognised as being a driver to improve inequalities of outcome.

7. Impact – Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33

Which Themes from the Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33 will the policy, function or strategy impact on?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Theme 1: Empowered people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities can have their voices heard, and influence the places and services that affect them • Gaps in outcomes linked to poverty are reduced
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Theme 2: Working people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people will be in sustained employment, with fair pay and conditions • Poverty related gaps are addressed, so young people can have the skills for learning, life and work • Businesses are supported and encouraged to reduce their carbon footprint and develop green jobs
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Theme 3: Healthy people and places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People live longer and healthier lives • Supportive systems are in place to prevent alcohol and drug misuse • Our natural capital is looked after, and we are effectively adapting and mitigating the effects of climate change
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Theme 4: A supportive place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable adults and children are protected and supported, ensuring they can live safely and independently • We recognise where people are affected by trauma, and respond in ways that prevent further harm and support recovery • Public protection and community safety are improved through targeting our resources to reduce the risk of offending and harm
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Theme 5: A thriving place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in our working age population by encouraging people to stay here, and attracting new people to settle here • Development of strong community-based services that respond to local need • Homes are energy efficient and fuel poverty is reduced • Increased use of active travel and sustainable transport options • Easy access to attractive and safe public spaces, and high-quality arts and cultural opportunities

Briefly describe how the policy, function or strategy will impact on the Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/22 Themes.

Theme 4: The aim of the Policy is to free up or increase household income to meet the fuel bills of older people during the winter of 2024/25. The provision of the payment provides financial support to all eligible households at the qualifying date. Older people who tend to require more fuel will therefore be supported.

Theme 5: The provision of the credit reduces fuel poverty and signals inclusivity, promoting Inverclyde as a good place to live.

8. Impact – Council Plan 2023/28

Which Themes from the Council Plan 2023/28 will the policy, function or strategy impact on?

X	<p>Theme 1: People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our young people have the best start in life through high quality support and education • Gaps in outcomes linked to poverty are reduced • People are supported to improve their health and wellbeing • More people will be in employment, with fair pay and conditions • Our most vulnerable families and residents are safeguarded and supported
□	<p>Theme 2: Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities are thriving, growing and sustainable • Our strategic housing function is robust • Our economy and skills base are developed • We have a sufficient supply of business premises • Our natural environment is protected
□	<p>Theme 3: Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality and innovative services are provided, giving value for money • Our employees are supported and developed

Briefly describe how the policy, function or strategy will impact on the Council Plan 2023/28 Themes.

Theme 1: The aim of the Policy is to increase income over winter 2024/25, aiding those in the specified groups who do not qualify for the PAWFP.

9. Evidence

What evidence do you have to help identify any potential impacts of the policy, function or strategy?

Note: Evidence could include information from consultations, surveys, the Citizens’ Panel, focus groups, interviews, projects, user feedback, complaints, Officers’ knowledge and experience, equalities monitoring data, publications, research, reports, and local and national groups.

Evidence	Details
Consultation/engagement (including any carried out while developing the policy, function or strategy)	The Policy was agreed following engagement with experienced officers who, in recent years, developed cost of living support schemes to support low income households.
Research	<p>CT and HB records were examined to establish the number of CT accounts in scope for the payment.</p> <p>‘Age UK’ calls for more targeted support for older people on lower incomes so they can get through the winter. They campaign for older people who consume more fuel to heat their homes and to run appliances to keep health conditions under control. The payment will give older people the means and confidence to use fuel over the winter period.</p>
Officers’ knowledge and experience (including feedback from frontline staff)	Officer experience of delivering one-off Cost of Living Awards will support the implementation of the Inverclyde Council Anti-Poverty Winter Fuel Payment.
Equalities monitoring data	1,100 CTR and/or HB claimants and up to 200 CT-exempt households on the grounds that all the occupants are SMI.

User feedback (including complaints)	
Stakeholders	
Other	
Are there information gaps and, if so, what are these?	No

10. Consequences of Analysis

What steps will you take in response to the findings of your analysis? Please select at least one of the following and provide a brief explanation.

a.	Continue development with no changes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Households with low income who are marginally outside the criteria for PAWFP may be disproportionately negatively affected by fuel costs and experience fuel poverty.
b.	Continue development with minor alterations	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c.	Continue development with major changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
d.	Discontinue development and consider alternatives (where relevant)	<input type="checkbox"/>	

How will the effect of the policy, function or strategy be monitored following implementation?

The payment of the credit to CT accounts in 2024/25 and payments by bank transfer will be monitored.

When is the policy, function or strategy due to be implemented?

In winter 2024/25, following approval by the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 19 November 2024. The Inverclyde Council Anti-Poverty Winter Fuel Payment will apply only to those people who meet the criteria described at section (1)(h). An extract of data will be taken during week beginning 4th November 2024 to determine eligibility.

When will the policy, function or strategy be reviewed?

The delivery of the fund will be reviewed in April 2025 and the findings will be reported to Policy and Resources Committee by May 2025.

What resources are available for the implementation of the policy, function or strategy? Have these resources changed?

Delivery will be carried out by existing resources.

11. Please use the space below to detail any other matters arising from the Equality Impact Assessment process, including what action could be taken to mitigate the impact of the policy, function or strategy.

Households whose occupants are classed as SMI will receive a letter which will include the contact details for the Council’s Customer Service Centre and the Advice First service, both of which can provide support with the application process for the Winter Heating Payment.

Details of the Person(s) who completed the Assessment:	
Name:	Tracy Bunton
Position:	Revenues and Benefits Manager
Date:	6 th November 2024
Authorised by:	
Name:	Alan Puckrin
Position:	Chief Financial Officer
Date:	12 th November 2024

Please send a copy of the completed Template to Karen Barclay, Corporate Policy and Performance Officer at karen.barclay@inverclyde.gov.uk.