

Equality Impact Assessment

ID Number 2211

old number 977

Update 04.12.23

Introductory Information

Budget/Project name

Household Support Fund

Proposal type

- Budget
- Project

Decision Type

- Cabinet
- Cabinet Committee (e.g. Cabinet Highways Committee)
- Leader
- Individual Cabinet Member
- Executive Director/Director
- Officer Decisions (Non-Key)
- Council (e.g. Budget and Housing Revenue Account)
- Regulatory Committees (e.g. Licensing Committee)

Lead Cabinet Member

Julie Grocott

Entered on Q Tier

- Yes
- No

Year(s)

- 21/22
- 23/23
- 23/24
- 24/25
- other

EIA date: 28/09/21, updated 01/03/2023, 26/06/2023, updated 04/12/2023

EIA Lead

- Adele Robinson
- Annemarie Johnston
- Bashir Khan
- Beverley Law
- Ed Sexton
- Louise Nunn
-
-

Person filling in this EIA form

Alex Westran

Lead Director for Project

Ajman Ali

Lead Equality Objective

- Understanding Communities
- Workforce Diversity
- Leading the city in celebrating & promoting inclusion
- Break the cycle and improve life chances

Portfolio, Service and Team

Cross-Portfolio

- Yes No

Portfolio

Neighbourhoods

Is the EIA joint with another organisation (eg NHS)?

- Yes No

Brief aim(s) of the proposal and the outcome(s) you want to achieve

The aim of the proposal is to use the Household Support Fund to support vulnerable people who are experiencing hardship. We want to ensure that the fund goes to those most in need and that the distribution of the fund helps alleviate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis for those who are affected by inequalities. This EIA has been completed in conjunction with a Cost-of-living cohort analysis which has looked at which groups and communities are disproportionately impacted by the cost of living crisis, where support is already being received and which groups are not receiving enough support. **Update December 2023-** a previously ringfenced fund from the Household Support Fund (delegated to the Director of Communities) has been allocated to the application scheme to ensure there is sufficient money in the scheme to meet need. It also seems the most equitable way of meeting the objectives of the October 2023 Full Council motion requesting the Strategy and Resources Committee look at fully costed proposals to help put cash in people's pockets at Christmas. Equality implications will continue be monitored against awards made and will be considered as part of the ongoing delivery of the scheme and will be coordinated by the Cost-of-living strategy groups (Strategic, Tactical and Operational).

Impact

Under the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) we have to pay due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations

More information is available on the [Council website](#) including the [Community Knowledge Profiles](#).

Note the EIA should describe impact before any action/mitigation. If there are both negatives and positives, please outline these – positives will be part of any mitigation. The action plan should detail any mitigation.

Overview

Briefly describe how the proposal helps to meet the Public Sector Duty outlined above

The objective of the Household Support Fund (HSF) is to provide support to vulnerable households who most need it through the cost-of-living crisis. It aims to assist households via small grants to meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities.

The nature of the Covid-19 virus and latterly the cost-of-living crisis has not been felt evenly across all communities and what we have seen is there is a strong relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and health inequality which will be further compounded by the economic outfall as the cost-of-living crisis impacts.

During the delivery of the HSF and the cost-of-living crisis generally so far, we have collected data and consulted with community leaders to understand the scale of the impact of the crisis on different groups. Our understanding from the response phase supporting communities in Sheffield is that the people who were already classed as disadvantaged before this crisis are growing more disadvantaged, and that more people will be falling into vulnerability due to stagnant wages, lower employment levels, then compounded by rising costs for energy, food and essentials.

Analysis of HSF spend between October 2021 through to January 2023 demonstrates this, with 33% of spend going towards supporting individuals with energy and water costs, and a further 17% towards food (excluding Free School Meals cohort food voucher funding, which represented 28% of spend at this point). With continued inflation, it is anticipated that need in these areas is only likely to increase. Supporting people financially when they experience a crisis is a key component to preventing further hardship that they may be unable to recover from if help is not provided. We recognise that groups in our communities who are already more affected by inequalities are more likely to need financial support, we are using the data that we collect and the insight gained from consultation to ensure that our support is directed towards those who need it most. We are also using census data, national research and analysis, DWP data and data from other Council services such as Council Tax and Benefits to assess which groups are disproportionately impacted and which groups are in most need of support through the HSF and connected processes.

Equality implications will be monitored against awards made and will be considered as part of the ongoing delivery of the scheme and will be coordinated by the Cost-of-living strategy groups (Strategic, Tactical and Operational).

Communication with groups that are identified as needing additional support in raising awareness of the scheme and help to apply will be targeted, support to help those groups apply will be mainly facilitated by the Trusted Assessor process, but also using translation services on the community helpline and by in person sessions in communities, as well as comms campaigns and through engagement with community and voluntary sector partners.

Data and consultation insight will also help us decide where targeted awards should be made. Targeted awards will be made where we can determine that particular groups have not already received energy support or where we can determine that certain cohorts are not accessing the HSF in the levels expected in comparison to population levels and deprivation levels.

Please see the [attached link](#) to view the background paper relating to the cohort analysis

See supporting demographic information via the JSNA and Community Knowledge Profiles.

<http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/your-city-council/community-knowledge-profiles.html>

Impacts

Proposal has an impact on

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carers
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Voluntary/Community & Faith Sectors
<input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy/Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/> Cohesion
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partners
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Poverty & Financial Inclusion
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sex	<input type="checkbox"/> Armed Forces
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Give details in sections below.

Health

Does the Proposal have a significant impact on health and well-being (including effects on the wider determinants of health)?

- Yes *if Yes, complete section below*

Staff

- Yes

Impact

- Positive ○ Neutral ○ Negative

Level

- None ○ Low ○ Medium ○ High

Details of impact

People with disabilities are more vulnerable to rising costs of essentials than many other groups, because energy and food make up a greater share of their budgets, partly because of additional needs caused by their health problems. Those in work are also more likely to be in low-income roles. Disabled people are almost three times as likely to live in material deprivation than the rest of the population (Resolution Foundation). Around 41% of disabled adults said they couldn't afford to keep their homes warm, as opposed to 23% of the rest of the population (Resolution Foundation).

This year, Citizen's Advice supported a record number of disabled people with cost-of-living issues, with people who are permanently sick or disabled being the most common occupational group to be assisted with crisis support (Citizens Advice Cost of Living Dashboard). Disability Sheffield also report that they expect to see a delayed impact of cost-of-living on disabled people, potentially due to the reduction in the general cost-of-living support provided to households, as well as the cumulative effect of ongoing high food and energy costs.

The proposal that will be taken to S&R committee sets out changes to the application process for HSF that will remove the evidence burden for those suffering from long term health conditions who are registered disabled. Applicants who meet this criteria and who are in receipt of means tested benefits will automatically receive an award and will not be required to provide evidence of their hardship.

Staff and customers are able to access the HSF fund if they meet the eligibility criteria.

Customers

- Yes

Impact

- Positive ○ Neutral ○ Negative

Level

- None ○ Low ● Medium ○ High

Details of impact

Same as staff – See above

Comprehensive Health Impact Assessment being completed

- Yes ● No

Please attach health impact assessment as a supporting document below.

Public Health Leads has signed off the health impact(s) of this EIA

- Yes ● No

Health Lead

Age

Staff
 Yes No

Impact
 Positive Neutral Negative

Level
 None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Overall, poverty rates for individuals aged 16-24 are higher than for those in some higher age brackets (20% for 16-24s, as opposed to 17% for 25-29s and 18% for 30-34s - JRF). However, again, within this, there are specific groups of concern – notably single people under 25 who are living independently. Young people tend to have lower levels of earning, fewer savings and be more likely to rent, rather than own their property, with those in private rented accommodation being particularly hard-hit by increased rents.

Young people are also entitled to significantly less from benefits than older people. For example, the monthly standard allowance for Universal Credit for single people under 25 is £292.11, as opposed to £368.74 for single people aged 25 and upwards. Local Housing Allowance, the figure that governs the rent that can be covered by Housing Benefit/the housing element of Universal Credit for individuals in private-rented accommodation, is also lower for single people under 35 – as this is based around the costs of a renting a room in a shared property. Rates have also been frozen since April 2020, reducing the amount payable yet further. Private-rented property is also often the primary option for single people young people, who often have limited access to social housing.

The proposals set out in the form 2 provide enhanced awards for people who fall into this category, awards will also be provided without the requirement to provide evidence of hardship if the applicant is in receipt of a means tested benefit.

Customers
 Yes No

Impact
 Positive Neutral Negative

Level
 None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Same as staff – See above

Disability - See health

Staff
 Yes No

Impact
 Positive Neutral Negative

Level
 None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Yes No Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Pregnancy/Maternity - Not applicable

Staff

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Customers

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Race

Staff

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Nationally, [JRF](#) findings suggest there are huge variations in poverty rate by ethnicity. For example, around half of all people in households headed by someone of Bangladeshi ethnicity were in poverty in 2020/21, with rates for people in households headed by someone of Pakistani or Black ethnicity also having very high poverty rates of more than 4 in 10, more than twice the rate of people in households headed by someone of white ethnicity.

A Resolution Foundation [report](#) shows very recent polling evidence that people from diverse communities are more likely to be skipping meals compared to those from white households. This disparity between communities reflects inequalities that were also evident during the pandemic. We know from conversations with different communities throughout cost-of-living response and pandemic, that access to key information and support, and lack of trust can make it harder for people in to access support they are entitled to. There is ongoing work with

communities to co-develop messages in languages and formats that are more accessible to them, and work with trusted assessors within community organisations to improve access to HSF and other hardship support.

The diverse communities cohort includes asylum seekers, a group that we know can be often be in hardship, relying on asylum support payments of around £40 per week to meet day to day living costs. We have not considered this group in detail here, as Household Support Fund guidance currently restricts payments to any people without recourse to public funds, including asylum seekers, to individuals with needs beyond destitution, for example where there is a community care need, or a child's wellbeing is at-risk. Access to the scheme is therefore provided by referrals through from Social Care teams internally.

Customers

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

See above

Religion/Belief – Not applicable**Staff**

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact**Customers**

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact**Sex****Staff**

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Although the Cohort Analysis has not specifically focussed on sex as an area that creates inequalities in the sense of financial hardship and poverty, within other areas of the cohort analysis there were key findings that related to sex. For example single parent families are more likely to experience hardship and those families and this can disproportionately affect women.

Also people living independently and people who are under 25 and live independently, these households are most likely to be male, meaning in this group, males are disproportionately impacted.

Both of the above cohorts will be targeted for enhanced payments and the removal of the burden to evidence hardship when in receipt of means tested benefits.

Customers

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

See above

Sexual Orientation – Not applicable

Staff

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Customers

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Transgender – Not applicable

Staff

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level
 None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Customers

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Carers

Staff
 Yes No

Impact
 Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Unpaid carers are likely to be disproportionately impacted by cost-of-living issues. [JRF](#) report that carers are more likely to be in poverty than those without (29% compared with 20%), with 34% of households in receipt of Carer's Allowance being in poverty. [Office for National Statistics](#) report that people who were economically inactive for reasons other than being retired, such as those who are studying or have caring responsibilities, were more likely to have run out of food and be unable to buy more, and to be unable to keep their homes warm, than other groups.

Many carers live with an individual with a disability or long-term health condition, who themselves are more likely to be impacted by cost-of-living issues, something that is considered further below. Carers are also often less likely to be able to work, thereby restricting their ability to increase their income. Anecdotally, the Voluntary Sector Liaison Team also report that many carers do not claim Carer's Allowance, due to the potential impact of this on the benefits of the person that they care for. Many people also do not recognise themselves as carers and this is an important consideration when considering how to target support at this group.

Those in receipt of carers allowance will be provided with an enhanced award via the HSF, also, where an unpaid carer is also in receipt of other means tested benefits, the applicant will no longer be required to evidence hardship.

Customers

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level
 None Low Medium High

Details of impact

See above

Voluntary/Community & Faith Sectors

Staff
 Yes No

Impact
 Positive Neutral Negative

Level
 None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Those processing applications to the HSF are supported by the CVFS by receiving applications from organisations who are supporting their clients, this means it is easier for staff members to make a decision and to ensure that support is going to those who need it the most.

Customers
 Yes No

Impact
 Positive Neutral Negative

Level
 None Low Medium High

Details of impact

The cohort analysis and previous development of the HSF scheme and trusted assessor process has highlighted that the Voluntary/Community & Faith Sectors are key partners when it comes to increasing uptake of the Household Support fund, by supporting their clients to make applications and also by engagement with their communities and the distribution of comms messages.

There are over 40 trusted assessors from this sector, the cohort analysis has helped highlight where there are organisations in particular communities that we need to focus engagement work and comms messages, to allow us to increase scheme uptake in communities that are likely to need more support.

Cohesion – Not applicable

Staff
 Yes No

Impact
 Positive Neutral Negative

Level
 None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Customers

Impact Page 133

Yes No Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Partners – Not applicable

Staff

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Customers

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Poverty & Financial Inclusion

Staff

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Staff will be targeted with internal comms around the support available if they are impacted by the cost of living, and also with comms and toolkits to assist customers who may need to be provided with support to tackle poverty and improve financial inclusion.

Customers

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact

The Cohort Analysis has focussed entirely on how cohorts and communities are disproportionately impacted by matters relating to poverty and financial inclusion. The form 2 proposals are designed to ensure that those who are most likely to experience poverty or less likely to be able to access support when it is needed, as highlighted by the cohort analysis, are given enhanced awards or are provided with support to apply, alongside targeted engagement and making it easier to apply and receive an award.

Armed Forces – Not applicable**Staff**

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact**Customers**

Yes No

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact**Other****Staff**

Yes No

Please specify

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

Level

None Low Medium High

Details of impact**Customers**

Yes No

Please specify

Impact

Positive Neutral Negative

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Level
 None Low Medium High

Details of impact

Cumulative Impact

Proposal has a cumulative impact

- Yes No

<input type="radio"/> Year on Year	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Across a Community of Identity/Interest
<input type="radio"/> Geographical Area	<input type="radio"/> Other

If yes, details of impact

Some communities will be more impacted by multiple factors affecting socio-economic disadvantage. Data showing multiple indices of deprivation will be used to target awards and engagement where disadvantage is identified. Those who receive an award from the HSF who are impacted by more than one factor may receive multiple enhancements to their award and may receive an automatic award. So cumulative impact is acknowledged in the payment calculation.

Proposal has geographical impact across Sheffield

- Yes No

If Yes, details of geographical impact across Sheffield

Certain geographical areas will be more impacted by multiple factors affecting socio-economic disadvantage. The cohort analysis has highlighted these areas and engagement and communications are being targeted to these areas.

Local Area Committee Area(s) impacted

- All Specific

If Specific, name of Local Partnership Area(s) impacted

Action Plan and Supporting Evidence

Action Plan

Targeted awards, engagement and communications campaigns to be carried out as an ongoing piece of work, to be taken forward by the Cost-of-living Support Hub.

Supporting Evidence (Please detail all your evidence used to support the EIA)

Please see [Cohort Analysis](#)

Consultation

Consultation required

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Yes No

If consultation is not required please state why

Are Staff who may be affected by these proposals aware of them

Yes No

Are Customers who may be affected by these proposals aware of them

Yes No

If you have said no to either please say why

Part of the work to raise awareness of the Household Support Fund has identified that not everyone who is eligible is aware that they are eligible. Cohort data has helped us to identify those who may struggle to access the fund or who may be more impacted by socio-economic disadvantage. Engagement and communications campaigns are being targeted where disadvantage is identified.

Summary of overall impact

Summary of overall impact

Medium impact

Summary of evidence

Cost-of-living dashboard and community helpline dashboard data. [Cohort Analysis](#)

Changes made as a result of the EIA

Targeted comms, engagement and support to apply. Enhanced awards dependent on cohort, and the removal of the requirement to provide evidence of hardship if you are part of a disproportionately impacted cohort.

Escalation plan

Is there a high impact in any area?

Yes No

Overall risk rating after any mitigations have been put in place

High Medium Low None

Sign Off

EIAs must be agreed and signed off by the equality lead in your Portfolio or corporately. Has this been signed off? [Page 137](#)

Yes

No

Date agreed 04.12.23

Review Date