

North Ayrshire Council

Equality & Children's Rights Impact Assessment (Full Form)

Introduction

This form will assist in carrying out an **Equality Impact Assessment** and where appropriate, **Socio-Economic, Children's Rights, Island Communities and Consumer Duty Impacts** of new, revised and existing policies and practices. Guidance on how to complete assessments is given in the Council's **Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessment Toolkit**.

The form is mandatory and must be published on the Council website once the policy or practice has been approved.

Section 1 - General Details

1.1 Directorate/Service: Education
Section: Education

1.2 Name of Policy, Practice or Proposal being assessed and determination of whether this is a new, existing or a budget proposal:

Review of Education Psychology Service

This is a budget proposal.

Please insert Budget Reference number (if applicable) : SP/ED/25/13

1.3 List of participants in the assessment

Andrew McClelland

1.4 Manager responsible for the impact assessment

Name: Andrew McClelland

Designation: Head of Service

1.5 Timetable (should be started during the development phase of the proposal)

Date Assessment Started: 9 September 2024

Interim Review Date: Not applicable

Final sign off by Head of Service at the end of the form.

Section 2 – Aims and Relevance

2.1 What is the purpose of the policy practice or proposal?

This proposal is to conduct a review of the educational psychology service and deliver a financial reduction equivalent to a 1.0 FTE reduction.

Section 3 – Equality and Diversity

3.1 What evidence were you able to access about the relevant needs of protected groups as outlined in section 3.3 below (Please include your sources – links to equality providers and evidence can be found in both the toolkit and the [Promoting Equality](#) Page on Connects).

Children and young people

3.2 Are there any gaps in your evidence or areas of uncertainty?

Direct engagement with the impacted workforce

3.3 From the list of protected characteristic groups identified in the table below please identify any potential positive and negative impacts on any of these protected characteristics?

Protected Characteristic	Impact on the Protected Characteristics (yes or no)	Please Explain (Positive or Negative or Neutral)
Age - Older people, children and young people – please identify which categories will be affected	Yes	Negative impact on children and young people through reduced provision of educational psychology supports and interventions in North Ayrshire education establishments. This could potentially reduce provision of targeted support for learners most in need.
Disability - Physical and Learning	Yes	Negative impact on learners with disabilities through reduced provision of educational psychology supports and interventions in North Ayrshire education establishments.
Gender reassignment - Where a person is living as the opposite gender to their birth	No	No comment

Protected Characteristic	Impact on the Protected Characteristics (yes or no)	Please Explain (Positive or Negative or Neutral)
Pregnancy and Maternity	No	No comment
Race, ethnicity, colour, nationality or national origins (including gypsy/ travellers, refugees and asylum seekers)	No	No comment
Religion or belief (includes religious and philosophical beliefs, including no belief)	No	No comment
Sex - Women and Men	No	No comment
Sexual Orientation - Lesbian, gay and bisexual people	No	No comment
Marriage and Civil Partnership - marriage between same sex couples is included	No	No comment
Human Rights	No	No comment

Protected Characteristic	Impact on the Protected Characteristics (yes or no)	Please Explain (Positive or Negative or Neutral)
<p>Care Experienced - This term refers to anyone who is currently in care or has been for any length of time regardless of their age and includes Kinship Care (other family members); Looked After at Home (with support from social work); Residential Care; Foster Care; Secure Care; Adoption.</p>	Yes	Negative impact on care experienced learners through reduced provision of educational psychology supports and interventions in North Ayrshire education establishments.
<p>Other - Poverty, homelessness, ex-offenders, isolated rural communities, carers, part-time workers, or people in a marriage/civil partnership</p>	Yes	Negative impact on learners impacted by poverty through reduced provision of educational psychology supports and interventions in North Ayrshire education establishments

3.4 Describe any consultation or engagement undertaken, including details of the groups involved and the methods used.

An online prebudget engagement was undertaken by North Ayrshire Council in late 2024 that was completed by 714 respondents. This included engagement with a wide range of groups including children and young people; care experienced young people; young ambassadors; North Ayrshire Youth Executive; Joint Cabinet Café Conversation; Employee Disability Forum; ESOL learners Syrian / Afghan / Ukrainian / Russian speakers; NAFCO; Men's and she sheds; long covid group; parents and carers supported via employability services; Equal groups; New Scots groups; and North Ayrshire tenants. A summary of the key findings in relation to this proposal has been provided below: Many responses highlighted concerns about the potential reduction of educational psychology services, especially in light of the mental health crisis and increased need for support for neurodiverse children and those with Additional Support Needs (ASN). Respondents said that educational psychologists play a vital role in addressing the mental health and behavioural challenges of students, supporting both children and school staff. Many comments expressed worry over long waiting times for mental health support and the already stretched capacity of the service, fearing that cuts will worsen these issues and delay necessary interventions. There are calls for more investment, not reductions, citing

the ongoing pressures on services like CAMHS. Most respondents felt that vulnerable children and young people, particularly those with mental health issues, additional support needs (ASN), and those from minority or disadvantaged groups, would be adversely affected by a reduction in the educational psychology service. Many highlighted the importance of these services in addressing issues like trauma, neurodiversity, and gender identity, as well as their role in diagnosing learning disabilities and providing appropriate interventions. Concerns were raised that cutting or reducing these services will disproportionately affect children from low-income backgrounds, minority groups, and those facing mental health challenges. Respondents said that island schools already struggle with fewer support staff and face difficulties in accessing services due to the distance from mainland resources. They felt the reduction of this service would disproportionately affect island children, particularly those with additional support needs (ASN) and mental health issues, as they have fewer alternative options for support. Feedback provided by North Ayrshire's local branch of Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) stated this reduction hinders the assessment of certain additional support needs. EIS representatives also highlighted levels of ASN and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and the depletion of other services, mean this reduction will impact on those who may need the highest level of intervention.

Questions 3.5 – 3.7 refer to the 'Three Key needs (or aims) [of the Equality Duty](#)'.

- 3.5 Which aspects of the policy eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation?

Budget saving proposal will not unlawfully discriminate, cause harassment or result in victimisation to any specific group. HR policies and procedures will be followed to progress educational psychology service reductions.

- 3.6 Which aspects of the policy advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not?

The budget saving proposal will potentially result in less equality of opportunities for children with relevant protected characteristics. As a result, this budget saving proposal is unlikely to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristics and those who do not.

- 3.7 Which aspects of the policy foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not? (Does it tackle prejudice and promote a better understanding of equality issues).

Budget saving proposal will not detrimentally impact good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

- 3.8 If you have identified any negative impacts of your proposal how will you mitigate these?

The Education Service is acutely aware of the impact poverty can have on learner outcomes. Consequently, this is a key focus in the Education Service Plan with work underway through the development of a Raising Attainment Strategy to mitigate impact where possible. School leaders continue to receive Pupil Equity Funding,

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which will be bolstered by local authority Strategic Equity Funding, to ensure interventions and supports that are shown to be most impactful are prioritised to mitigate impact. The proposed budget reduction equates to approximately 7% of the total budget for Educational Psychology. A review of educational psychology allocation models and methods of provision will ensure that supports can continue to be prioritised in areas of greatest need and that highly impactful aspects of the role are retained to minimise impact on learners.

3.9 Is the policy or practice intended to promote equality by permitting positive action or lead to positive outcomes for people based on a protected characteristic?

Not applicable

Section 4 – The Fairer Scotland Duty

The Fairer Scotland Duty ('the Duty'), Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010 places a legal responsibility on the Council to actively consider ('pay due regard to') how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making decisions.

- 4.1 Does the proposal have the potential to have a significant impact on inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage? (consider low income; low wealth; material deprivation; area deprivation; communities of place or interest, socio-economic background).

Yes, the proposal has the potential to have a significant impact on inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage.

If No, please go to Section 5.

If Yes please provide more information under any of the below headings which are relevant, highlighting any evidence and sources of evidence used to inform your information.

Reduced educational psychology supports and interventions could potentially reduce targeted support to learners most in need. Learners and families who are supported by the educational psychology service can experience inequalities of outcome due to socio-economic disadvantage. Consequently, the proposal to reduce support in this area could disproportionately impact learners impacted by poverty. Local data also highlights a persistent poverty related gap between learner outcomes between learners living in North Ayrshire's areas of highest deprivation and all other learners. A reduction in educational psychology support could further exacerbate poverty-related learner outcome gaps and lead to more families requiring access to more intensive support by external agencies (for example, children and families social work services).

- 4.2 Low Income/Income Poverty: Cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food and clothing

As noted above, reducing educational psychology support may negatively impact attainment, achievement and post-school destinations of learners impacted by poverty.

- 4.3 Low/and or no wealth: Having enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to pay for any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.

As noted above, reducing educational psychology support may negatively impact attainment, achievement and post-school destinations of learners impacted by poverty.

- 4.4 Material Deprivation: Being unable to access basic goods and services, i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure/hobbies

Version: 6.0

None directly related to this budget saving proposal.

4.5 Area Deprivation: Where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of transport).

None directly related to this budget saving proposal.

4.6 If impacts have been identified how will these be mitigated or explored in more detail? (please outline below)

The Education Service is acutely aware of the impact poverty can have on learner outcomes. Consequently, this is a key focus in the Education Service Plan with work underway through the development of a Raising Attainment Strategy to mitigate impact where possible. School leaders continue to receive Pupil Equity Funding, which will be bolstered by local authority Strategic Equity Funding, to ensure interventions and supports that are shown to be most impactful are prioritised to mitigate impact. The proposed budget reduction equates to approximately 7% of the total budget for Educational Psychology. A review of educational psychology allocation models and methods of provision will ensure that supports can continue to be prioritised in areas of greatest need and that highly impactful aspects of the role are retained to minimise impact on learners.

Section 5 – Children’s Rights

When considering the Children’s Right’s Impact process, some of the key considerations include any evidence, research and consultation (specifically including any consultation or engagement with young people).

- 5.1 Are any Children’s Rights impacted by this proposal? ([The Children’s Rights Articles](#) have been matched against the GIRFEC Wellbeing Indicators – where relevant these are highlighted in 5.4 below)

Yes, Children’s Rights are impacted by this proposal.

- 5.2 Please indicate, if possible, how many children and young people (nearest estimate) are likely to be affected by the policy or measure?

17,400 children and young people (those attending state schools in the area)

- 5.3 Are some children and young people more likely to be affected than others?

Yes, some children and young people are more likely to be affected than others.

If, Yes what groups? (consider protected characteristics – for example, disabled young people, LGBT etc)

Children with additional support needs, care experienced learners and pupils impacted by poverty may potentially be more affected.

5.4 The following [Children’s Rights](#) and Wellbeing Indicators are likely to be affected by the policy/proposal:-

Wellbeing indicator (for example, safe, healthy etc)	Children’s Right (for example, 22 – refugee children)
<p>Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Responsible, Included</p>	<p>19: protection from violence, abuse and neglect ‘Children and Young People have the right to’ be kept safe from harm and protected against violence. They must be given proper care by those looking after them. 3 – best interests of the child ‘Children and Young People have the right to’ have their interests considered if a decision is being made by any person about them. What is best for them is what matters. 29 - goals of education ‘Children and Young People have the right to’ learn and develop their skills and personality fully, teach them about their own and other people’s rights and prepare them for adult life. 20 - children deprived of a family ‘Children and Young People have the right to’ special care if they can’t live with their parents. They may be looked after by other members of their family or by a different family. 12 - respect for the views of the child ‘Children and Young People have the right to’ speak up and have their opinions listened to and be taken seriously by adults on things that affect them. 23 - children with disabilities ‘Children and Young People have the right to’ if they have any kind of disability, have special help to make sure they can join in with things.</p>

5.5 What likely impact will the policy/proposal have on Children’s Rights and Wellbeing? Either Positive, Negative or Neutral.

A reduction in educational psychology resource may be detrimental to delivery of service and current approaches to meeting Children’s Rights that have been mapped to wellbeing indicators.

Children Rights -

Reductions in educational psychology resource may result in a decrease in available interventions and supports that enable children with additional support needs, care experienced learners, and learners impacted by poverty to achieve to their full potential.

Other Protected Characteristics

Reductions in educational psychology resource may result in a decrease in available interventions and supports that enable children with additional support needs, care experienced learners, and learners impacted by poverty to achieve to their full potential.

5.6 What consultation or engagement has taken place with young people?

An online prebudget engagement was undertaken by North Ayrshire Council in late 2024 that was completed by 714 respondents. This included engagement with a wide range of groups including children and young people; care experienced young people; young ambassadors; North Ayrshire Youth Executive; Joint Cabinet Café Conversation; Employee Disability Forum; ESOL learners Syrian / Afghan / Ukrainian / Russian speakers; NAFCO; Men's and she sheds; long covid group; parents and carers supported via employability services; Equal groups; New Scots groups; and North Ayrshire tenants. A summary of the key findings in relation to this proposal has been provided below: Many responses highlighted concerns about the potential reduction of educational psychology services, especially in light of the mental health crisis and increased need for support for neurodiverse children and those with Additional Support Needs (ASN). Respondents said that educational psychologists play a vital role in addressing the mental health and behavioural challenges of students, supporting both children and school staff. Many comments expressed worry over long waiting times for mental health support and the already stretched capacity of the service, fearing that cuts will worsen these issues and delay necessary interventions. There are calls for more investment, not reductions, citing the ongoing pressures on services like CAMHS. Most respondents felt that vulnerable children and young people, particularly those with mental health issues, additional support needs (ASN), and those from minority or disadvantaged groups, would be adversely affected by a reduction in the educational psychology service. Many highlighted the importance of these services in addressing issues like trauma, neurodiversity, and gender identity, as well as their role in diagnosing learning disabilities and providing appropriate interventions. Concerns were raised that cutting or reducing these services will disproportionately affect children from low-income backgrounds, minority groups, and those facing mental health challenges. Respondents said that island schools already struggle with fewer support staff and face difficulties in accessing services due to the distance from mainland resources. They felt the reduction of this service would disproportionately affect island children, particularly those with additional support needs (ASN) and mental health issues, as they have fewer alternative options for support. Feedback provided by North Ayrshire's local branch of Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) stated this reduction hinders the assessment of certain additional support needs. EIS representatives also highlighted levels of ASN and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and the depletion of other services, mean this reduction will impact on those who may need the highest level of intervention.

5.7 If Negative impacts are identified how will these be mitigated, or the effect reduced?

Negative impact for protected characteristic groups will be mitigated through a greater focus on utilising existing resource and meeting needs within the remaining educational psychology service. Key actions are outlined in the Education Service's annual improvement plan for 2024-25, which include enhanced training and resources for practitioners to meet the needs of ASN learners within mainstream settings, further aligning Pupil Equity Fund and Strategic Equity Fund to prioritise supports that are most impactful and developing a Raising Attainment Strategy. The proposed budget reduction equates to approximately 7% of the total budget for Educational Psychology. A review of educational psychology allocation models and methods of provision will ensure that supports can continue to be prioritised in areas of greatest need and that highly impactful aspects of the role are retained to minimise impact on learners.

Section 6 – Island Communities Impact (or Island Proofing)

Island Proofing is about considering the particular needs and circumstances of island communities when public sector organisations exercise their functions and make decisions. This has been added to the process of assessing the Council Plan and includes a range of issues such as access to services, digital connectivity, employment and access to education, transport and access to goods and services.

6.1 Do the intended outcomes of the proposal potentially differ or have a different impact for our Island Communities?

No

Section 7 – The Consumer Duty

The Consumer Duty is about the impact of Council proposals on consumers in Scotland. A Consumer is an individual or a small business that purchases, uses or receives goods or services in Scotland, that are supplied either by a business or a public body – please see [What is the Consumer Duty](#).

7.1 Will your proposal impact on consumers?

No

If no, please complete the 'Assessment not required' template by emailing northayrshireperforms@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

7.2 What are the impacts, if any, on consumers in general? Is it likely that consumers will experience harm because of this proposal?

Consumers in general would include all children and young people who currently make use of the educational psychology service, as well as those who may make use of the service in the future. A financial reduction equivalent to 1.0FTE could have a negative impact on consumers through reduced provision of educational psychology supports and interventions in North Ayrshire education establishments.

7.3 What are the impacts if any, on consumers in vulnerable circumstances? Is it likely that consumers in vulnerable circumstances will experience harm because of this proposal? (please include any relevant evidence or engagement with consumers)

*Vulnerable circumstances may be temporary in nature and may or may not arise as a result of a consumer's protected characteristics. For more information, please see [page 31 of Consumer Scotland's draft guidance on the consumer duty](#).

Click or tap here to enter text. The proposal may have a negative impact on vulnerable consumers. Learners with disabilities, care experienced learners and learners impacted by poverty may have reduced provision of educational psychology supports and interventions in North Ayrshire Education establishments. Additionally, the proposal may also have a negative impact on learners with temporary vulnerable circumstances who do not form part of a protected characteristic group through reduced provision of targeted support for learners most in need.

7.4 What consultation and engagement has taken place with consumers around your proposal?

Please refer to section 3.4 above

7.5 What alternative proposals are there that could improve outcomes for consumers and/or reduce harm to consumers? How do these compare to the original proposal?

The Education Service is acutely aware of the impact poverty can have on learner outcomes. Consequently, this is a key focus in the Education Service Plan with work underway through the development of a Raising Attainment Strategy to mitigate impact where possible. School leaders continue to receive Pupil Equity Funding,

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which will be bolstered by local authority Strategic Equity Funding, to ensure interventions and supports that are shown to be most impactful are prioritised to mitigate impact. The proposed budget reduction equates to approximately 7% of the total budget for Educational Psychology. A review of educational psychology allocation models and methods of provision will ensure that supports can continue to be prioritised in areas of greatest need and that highly impactful aspects of the role are retained to minimise impact on learners.

Section 8 – Crosscutting Impacts

8.1 Have any cross-cutting impacts been identified from other Council Services or Partner Agencies (multiple discrimination or accumulated effects of multiple proposals on a protected characteristic group)?

No cross-cutting impacts identified.

Section 9 – Outcome of the Assessment

There are four potential outcomes for this assessment which are:

- No major alterations to the policy assessed
- Adjust the policy as potential problems or missed opportunities identified.
- Continue the policy - justification required as potential for adverse impact has been identified.
- Stop and remove the policy or proposal, as potential for discrimination or other harmful impact.

9.1 Please detail the outcome of the assessment:

Continue the policy: the Impact Assessment identifies the potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality. Set out the justifications for continuing with it in section 9.3. For the most important policies and proposals, compelling reasons will be needed.

9.2 Please outline the justifications for continuing the policy/procedure.

North Ayrshire Council's budget pressures in both the short- and long-term necessitate the need for action now to achieve a balanced budget within 2025/26 as well as an ongoing focus on achieving financial sustainability. Consequently, whilst this saving is anticipated to have a low negative impact on learners, including those with protected characteristics, it is recommended for implementation to support the Council to reach a balanced budget position for 2025/26 financial year. Action taken through the education service's improvement plan will seek to mitigate impact where possible. In addition, the review of educational psychology will ensure highly impactful aspects of the role are retained to minimise impact on learners.

9.3 Please state the key issues, recommendations and future actions arising from the Integrated Impact Assessment.

Not applicable

Section 10 – Monitoring

10.1 Describe how you will monitor the impact of this policy for example, performance indicators used, other monitoring arrangements, who will monitor progress, criteria used to measure if outcomes are achieved, timescales including any future reviews of the impact of the proposal?

The Education Service's annual service plan, which is published in the Autumn following each academic session, provides an overview of service performance against ambitions within our Service Improvement Plan.

Section 11 – Sign Off

11.1 Head of Service who has approved the impact assessment.

Name: Andrew McClelland

Title: Head of Service

Date: 18 February 2025

Section 12 – Publication

12.1 Following approval by Head of Service, completed Impact Assessments need to be published on the Council's External Website.

Please email: northayrshireperforms@north-ayrshire.gov.uk