





Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer or www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment

Organisation prepared for (mark as appropriate)	 Somerset Council					
Version	1.1		Date Completed	25th April 2023		
Description of what is being impact assessed						
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On the 6th October 2021 the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) wrote to Local Authorities to announce the Household Support Fund grant (HSF) to support those most in need with the cost of living. The sum allocated to Somerset was £3,820,415.56 to help with the cost of food, energy bills and other essentials between 6th October 2021 and 31st March 2022 2. The first programme was extended for a further two rounds. Since the beginning of the programme, the Household Support Fund has been successfully distributed in Somerset, with the current round of funding due to end on March 31st 2023. 3. The DWP have extended this grant for twelve months from April 1st 2023 to March 31st 2024. The total grant for Somerset is £7,640,831, to be distributed throughout the year. The grant will be paid to the local authority in arrears of expenditure, based on data returns submitted in June and October 2022. 4. DWP guidance gives boundaries on the type of support which can be offered through this scheme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An application-based service for the public is required • The fund should primarily be used to support energy bills • The fund can also be used for support with food, and essentials such as white goods, clothing and essential transport-related costs. There is no prescriptive definition of essentials. • Advice services, including debt and benefit advice, can be funded. Guidance is clear that ‘we would not expect a large portion of funding to be spent on advice services’ and this must be linked to the essential funding listed above. 						

Evidence				
What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the Office of National Statistics , Somerset Intelligence Partnership , Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) , Staff and/ or area profiles ,, should be detailed here				
Various data has been sourced, focussing on areas of deprivation and numbers of people who are likely to be affected by the current cost of living, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP's datasets show 32,541 households in Somerset who are on Universal Credit as of 2022. • ONS data shows 82,558 households in Somerset include 1, 2 or more people disabled under the Equality Act. 				
Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups and what have they told you? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?				
Partner organisations, many of which service disadvantaged and under-represented communities and population cohorts. District councils which support disadvantaged and low-income groups and social housing tenants. Providers of financial support and advice to low-income households and individuals in financial distress.				
Analysis of impact on protected groups				
The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.				
Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people may not be able to access the online application process due to being unfamiliar with technology • Older people may not feel comfortable accessing financial support due to the stigma of asking for help 	☒	☐	☐

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Younger people may not be aware of the HSF through usual routes of promotion such as libraries, GPs etc. 			
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deaf people who use British Sign Language as their first language may not be able to access the online application process in English People with a learning disability may find it difficult to navigate the application process People with particular physical disabilities may not be able to complete an online application 	☒	☐	☐
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact envisaged 	☐	☒	☐
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact envisaged 	☐	☒	☐
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact envisaged 	☐	☒	☐
Race and ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who do not have English as their first language may not be aware of the HSF People who do not have English as their first language may not be able to access the online application process 	☒	☐	☐

Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requirements for particular diets, such as Halal or Kosher food may not be available with a food voucher 	☒	☐	☐
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact envisaged 	☐	☒	☐
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact envisaged 	☐	☒	☐
Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families and veterans)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact envisaged 	☐	☒	☐
Other, e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People in very rural areas may not be able to access large supermarkets who issue food vouchers People with a low income may not have the technology or the internet connection to be able to apply online 	☒	☒	☐

Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
Mitigation for access to online processes or large supermarkets, and language barriers	03/04/2023	Louise Palmer	Through regular review	☐

- Application processes will be simple and accessible, with in-person and online options, supported by Somerset's network of local voluntary organisations
- The online application process can be accessed by a wide range of statutory and voluntary sector workers, who can apply on a household's behalf. This ensures that anyone who cannot apply themselves online can do so through a third party.
- Funding will be provided to ensure alternative ways of meeting need, such as food boxes or gift cards for those who cannot use a voucher at a large supermarket

Mitigation for reaching those who are not using, or are unaware of, the fund

- Provision via locally led VCSE projects will broaden ability to meet need beyond the eligibility cohort associated with this grant.
- Schools and other professionals understand their cohorts so can identify those who need support
- Schools and colleges will have discretion to provide support beyond the identified cohort in order to meet locally identified need, and can promote the scheme to eligible young people
- Information about the fund is shared with groups supporting Somerset's race communities to ensure households are aware and supported to access the vouchers and wider support.
- Somerset Council uses multiple routes to communicate the fund, ensuring information is available for different age groups and people will be able to access information in different ways. This includes social media, libraries and GP surgeries.

Mitigation for access to religious or cultural diets

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online food vouchers include provision to meet cultural and religious requirements, such as FarmFoods who supply Halal food. 				
If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.				
Completed by:	Louise Palmer			
Date	24 th March 2023			
Signed off by:	Louise Palmer			
Date	24 th March 2023			
Equality Lead sign off name:	Tom Rutland			
Equality Lead sign off date:	28th April 2023			
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	Louise Palmer			
Review date:	29 th September 2023			